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ABSTRACT

The formal and informal pathways taken by Australian women from nonaccredited adult community education (ACE) to accredited programs of vocational education and training (VET) were examined in a national survey. Data were collected from a review of the literature on ACE, and telephone interviews with providers of ACE and VET (from a sample limited to 50-80) in urban and rural regions within Australia's states and territories. Information from the interviews was systematized into a comprehensive database that was in turn used to produce a print handbook to help providers plan pathways in ACE and VET organizations. The research established that in most states, the basic conditions promoting pathway development are lacking or poorly developed. Resourcing emerged as a key issue. It was recommended that VET competition policy be designed to reward rather than discourage arrangements that facilitate learners' movements from one provider to another or from ACE to VET within providers. Pathway planning was found to be facilitated where it is an integral part of community-based practice. A range of pathway-planning models, including entry point, integrated, provider partnership, community development, and culturally appropriate models, were identified. (The bibliography contains 50 references. Appended are the project interview schedule and a glossary of acronyms.) (MN)

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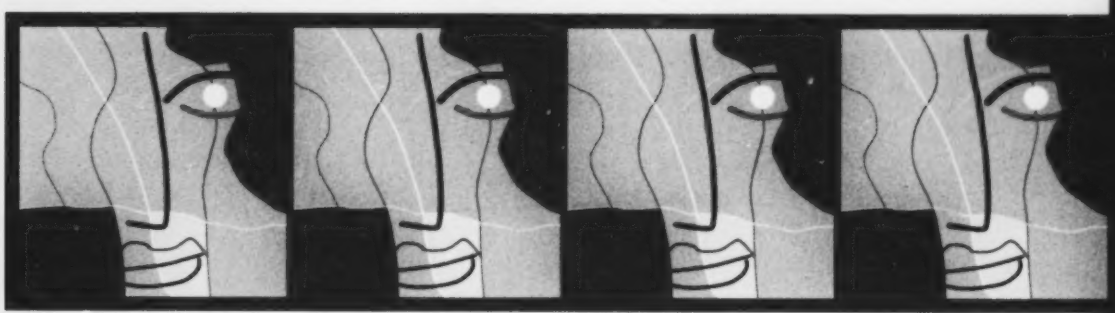
Planning Pathways



for Women from Adult Community Education to Vocational Education and Training

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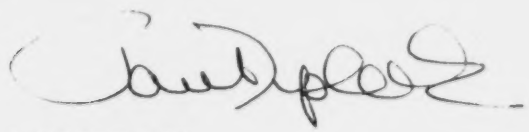
FOREWORD

It gives me pleasure to present the report *Planning Pathways - for Women from ACE to VET*. The Report was prepared for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Vocational Education, Employment and Training Women's Taskforce. Pathway planning, the linking of different educational experiences, including choosing and recognition of experiential learning, is a focus area of the *National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy*.

Women are more likely than men to exit and re-enter education and the workforce several times during their lives. They make choices that are determined by a host of social, economic and educational pressures. Their choices can be widened by a knowledge and understanding of available pathways.

Pathways could be through a variety of programs and experiences where women have flexibility in combining education, training and work on a full or part time basis. Training providers can broaden the range of pathways available to women by recognising the skills and knowledge women have gained through previous experiences. The vocational education and training system needs flexibility to cater to the various needs of women whichever pathway they choose.

Understanding educational pathways and how people come to take their path is important for those involved with education. Pathway planning enables education and training providers to offer greater choice to learners. This *Planning Pathways* Report describes many of the existing pathways between adult community education and vocational education and training. It also acknowledges the ability of the adult community education sector and the vocational education and training system to work together responsively and effectively to meet women's vocational education and training needs. The findings of this project should be utilised by policy makers, providers, learners and other stakeholders.



JANE DIPLOCK

Chair MCEETYA VEET Women's Taskforce

Planning Pathways

for women from ACE to VET

Project Report

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Managed by the Western Australian Department of Training
A project funded by the Australian National Training Authority through the Vocational Education and Training Women's Taskforce of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MYCEETYA)

Planning Pathways from ACE to VET

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and the project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian National Training Authority or the Western Australian Department of Training.

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Summary

Equity of access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) for women in Australia is dependant on the existence of pathways between Adult Community Education (ACE) and accredited VET courses. Large numbers of women participate in ACE, and the link between ACE and formal VET is a vital component for achieving the aims of the National Women's VET Strategy.

Women make up the large majority of participants in ACE programs and this project arose from increasing awareness in the sector that their programs must reflect the diverse needs of these participants (Gribble, 1992; ACFE, 1996). There is also an increased awareness that research must produce results that are useable by providers to enable them to improve their practice.

The Pathways Planning project is a national ACE study. It follows on from a number of recent national ACE projects which have highlighted the need to know more about pathway planning and ways to address barriers to access (Bennink and Blackwell, 1996; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996; Coventry and Higginson, 1996). The project also builds on the growing body of recent Australian ACE research in various states, including Ducie's WA neighbourhood house research, the Outcomes and Pathways study (ACFEB, 1995), case studies of good practice in ACE (Bradshaw, 1995) and research commissioned by BACE in NSW (McIntyre et al, 1993; McIntyre et al, 1995; McIntyre et al 1997).

Objectives

The aim of the project was to investigate and document 'models or practices in states and territories that provide formal or informal pathways, linkages or articulation from non-accredited adult and community education programs to accredited programs of vocational education and training'.

The project was to report on the findings on ACE-VET pathways, for women in ACE generally and with specific reference to the equity target priority groups of women identified in the National Strategy and produce a print resource which could be used by providers to develop pathways.

The research was required to document articulation and skill recognition practices used by various kinds of providers along with guiding assumptions, principles and models. How are providers responding to educational problems and issues? What course areas and qualification levels are part of the pathways process? What are the outcomes in various regions and locations in different states? Are these outcomes relevant to the course expectations of the women concerned, especially those in the priority groups?

The project brief focuses on the articulation and linkages between non-credit courses and accredited vocational courses, particularly but not exclusively where this linkage is between an ACE organisation and another recognised VET provider such as TAFE. The primary focus of the research is women's transition from informal, non-credit courses to accredited vocational courses.

Definitions

The project confronted numerous problems in defining the meaning of an ACE course, a vocational course and so on. As Schofield noted in her review of the role of ACE in the VET system, the term 'ACE' refers at once to a type of course, a type of organisation, an ethos and a sector of provision (Schofield, 1996). This ambiguity, while it may appear to gloss over differences, is unhelpful and has the potential to confuse the issues in pathway planning.

The researchers assumed that the main focus should be upon ACE defined primarily in terms of *a type of organisation* - a community-owned and community-managed organisation delivering educational and other services. An 'ACE course' then refers to *any* course offered by an ACE organisation, whether accredited or not and irrespective of its stream.

The project uses the term *non-credit course* to mean a non-accredited course without regard to its Stream. Hence an ACE course is not equated with Stream 1000 (though in some states an ACE course will be limited to this) or equating it to general adult education or using it exclusively to mean a non-vocational course (though in some states it will be understood as limited to this). The term *accredited course* refers to the accepted sense of a course registered with the training authority.

There are, nevertheless, different types of pathways, depending on the configuration of the VET system in each state, referring to both types of course and types of organisation. Three types of linkage which are within the scope of this project are

- *The ACE provider -VET provider pathway.* This is a pathway from a non-credit course in an ACE organisation to an accredited VET course with another VET provider such as TAFE. This pathway will be commonly found in NSW and Victoria where an independent ACE sector is recognised by government, but also may be found in other states where community organisations link their courses to TAFE and other VET providers.
- *The within-ACE pathway.* This is a pathway from a non-credit course to an accredited VET course *within an ACE organisation.* The participant makes a transition from non-credit to credit course within an ACE provider. This is possible in NSW and Victoria where accredited VET courses are offered by ACE providers.
- *The within TAFE pathway.* This is a pathway from a non-credit (Stream 1000) course in TAFE to an accredited course in TAFE (eg Stream 2000 or 3000). This pathway may be found in those states where most ACE provision (ie non-credit courses) are offered by TAFE because there is no recognised ACE sector (though there may be community organisations offering courses). There are 'within provider' pathways in other VET providers such as industry training bodies.

The main intention of the project is to examine how ACE organisations linking to TAFE may facilitate the entry of women, especially women in the equity target groups, into formal VET. Thus, the focus is on the transition from non-credit to credit courses made through a linkage of an ACE and TAFE organisation (first pathway type). However, other pathways are also important.

The concept of good practice

The researchers support the concept of *good practice in adult community education* outlined by Delia Bradshaw in her collection of case studies *Multiple Images, Common Threads* (Bradshaw, 1995, 133-138). In this view, good practice should not be narrowed to the technical and methodological aspects, but should look to the 'why' of the curriculum, 'the site where learning is determined', 'where all the forces and factors that want to have a say in education intersect', influencing all other aspects of practice. Judging 'good practice' means looking closely at what 'good' the curriculum assumes - what individual and social benefits it promises. It cannot be assumed that any one educational theory or policy position in itself delivers 'good practice'.

This concept implies that the educational and social values of particular 'models' of pathway planning are an important feature, not a peripheral one. Good practice in ACE also rightly raises questions about the values and philosophies within the vocational education and training system, and whether that system is sufficiently acknowledging the contribution of community-based adult education provision and the 'goods' which it delivers.

The concept of 'pathway'

The 'pathway' idea was explored through a concept mapping exercise. Pathway is a powerful metaphor for educational transition. While it is usual to define the meaning of a concept in one clear way, this can limit understanding of the different meanings 'pathways' have in practice. It is possible to uncover many associations which are brought into play in policy rhetoric, educational practice and everyday conversation.

This mapping suggests that there are several key meanings implied in the metaphor especially when it is used to describe access by women in adult and vocational education. There are potential conflicts or tensions between these meanings. A pathway can be -

- the making of connections or linkages by learners between one institutional location and another, one kind of learning experience and another
- the overcoming of obstacles or barriers along the way, including institutional or gateway barriers
- a choice of direction regarding an educational experience, implying an orientation to learning, as well as qualities of venturing
- a metaphor of learning as personal journey and search for meaning
- a progression to higher knowledge or learning, following 'the way' to go
- a map that can be used to guide learners along a learning route

Pathways imply assumptions about what directions are good for women or men and how they best decide on these directions. Pathways from non-credit to accredited courses are

seen as important because they achieve for the participant tangible gains in terms of some educational good such as skills, knowledge, understanding or competence. Understanding how people come to take their path is an important role for those involved with education.

The project was carried out over seven months from October 1996 to May 1997 and involved an extensive review of recent research and telephone interviews with organisations the researchers identified as consciously developing pathways from ACE to VET. Information was recorded by developing a comprehensive database which was used to produce a print resource for providers.

Literature review

More than a decade of research on the outcomes of adult community education in Australia refers in many places to the role of ACE in providing pathways for women from non-formal to accredited courses and vocational training.

A number of significant themes emerge, culminating in the recent national ACE projects which have concentrated on the question of pathways and barriers. These themes are, in summary

- awareness that women are the majority of participants in ACE has not led to a comparable emphasis in policy and research on how ACE should provide for particular groups of women
- the emergence of the pathways question in research before the first Senate Report, and the attention it is now receiving
- evidence from participation surveys, that general adult education courses attract relatively advantaged participants and play a less significant role in providing pathways for disadvantaged women than was thought to be the case
- evidence of the extent of the barriers to participation for many disadvantaged people which need to be addressed by specific strategies, to achieve equity outcomes
- evidence that recognition of ACE by the ANTA agreement has allowed providers to expand into accredited VET courses, and this has led to an increase in the number of pathways available to disadvantaged women, while in other ways, the new arrangements are impeding the potential of community providers to achieve equity outcomes
- evidence that current ANTA thinking about VET competition policy and the 'training market' presents a limited understanding of disadvantage and pays little regard to the role of community providers and their potential to deliver equity outcomes through pathways

Models of pathway planning

The research found that the development of pathway planning models is uneven across the different states and territories. Victoria is most strongly represented in the models documented because it has developed a strong network of community providers with well-established models set up to bridge women's courses into formal VET provision. One of the key outcomes of the research is that *well-developed* community-based

provision can play a central role in developing women's pathways to VET. Where this ethos and practice are not well-developed, there are few pathways and fewer models of good practice.

This section documents a range of models which are abstractions from richly complex sets of arrangements and these are reported in a fairly full way to highlight the holistic nature of pathway development. The models are named and classified to demonstrate different aspects of the analysis of pathway development. In turn, the models point to some key principles for developing pathways and these are described in the concluding section of this report.

For each model, one or more case studies is described and a wide range of examples can also be found in the Pathway Planning Handbook. The description includes:

- Entry point models
- The CGEA (Certificates in General Education for Adults) as an entry point
- Path to employment models
- Integrated models
- Provider partnerships
- Community development models
- Culturally appropriate pathways
- Statewide strategies
- Open learning as a pathway strategy
- Volunteer worker to VET training

Entry point models

Many pathway arrangements could be described as entry or 'starting point' models. It is common for ACE providers to observe that a course can be a bridge to further learning, the first step in a pathway. An informal non-credit course is organised as a means of reintroducing women to learning through a positive experience in a supportive environment. This may be deliberately linked by the provider to other follow-on options. Confidence in learning can be an outcome of any course.

The CGEA as an entry point model

Since many disadvantaged women have low levels of English language and literacy, adult literacy is often a key starting point. The Certificates in General Education for Adults has probably been the single most important pathway for such women. Volunteer tutor schemes have played an important role in neighbourhood houses. With the expansion of labour market programs in the 1990s, the role of ACE providers expanded further. Pathways are now being thought of as combining literacy and numeracy needs with other options including vocational education and training.

Path to employment models

One pathway model is a variation of this, where targeting local employment for women is the main consideration. These are often programs of specific occupational

training which allow women to create or take advantage of local employment opportunities, especially in child care or office skills. They are proven starting points for employment and numbers of women are demanding them because they are offered in a flexible, convivial and supportive way in a community setting rather than a less flexible and less supportive formal institution.

Integrated models

An 'integrated' model brings together several components in order to meet the needs of a particular group of women. This occurs within the ACE organisation which provides a range of options. Pathways are planned and developed largely within the one provider from an 'entry point' to another experience such as an accredited vocational course.

In general, the integration of components is an important guiding principle for pathway development. An integrated model can have features such as the following:

- They bring together ESL, literacy, numeracy, vocational education and general adult education options for students in order to meet a range of needs and make best use of scarce resources.
- They support pathways by an organisational and learning culture in which students are individually cared for and which is dedicated to the development of confidence and self esteem as well as the acquisition of competencies, where there are strong relationships between teachers and students and where teachers work collaboratively across areas.
- They include work experience in the curriculum and seek to adapt its content to ensure that training is practical and relevant to the workplace.

Some community centres are able to bring together different options with a high level of individual and group support and counselling. There is a clearly articulated developmental model based on actual experience and successful outcomes.

Provider partnership models

This family of models refers to pathways from ACE to an accredited course in TAFE, or other VET provider. There a number of variations of partnership models.

- There can be a partnership of equals, which does not depend upon the providers being of similar sizes, but on effective working relationships. In some states inter-agency collaboration has developed as a way of working for some community centres in disadvantaged areas.
- A small ACE centre may act as a feeder for accredited courses or agree to be an extended campus of a larger regional TAFE institute (or other VET provider) or the partnership can be well established and based on a collaboration of equals in a sharing of resources to mutual benefit.
- Inter-agency collaboration is a strategy for community centres in disadvantaged areas which are not primarily funded as 'ACE providers', but which have a key role in creating pathways to education and training. They may see their role as 'brokering educational options' for the community where the focus is on advice, referral and support for students at other local education providers.

Community development models

Another family of models combines elements of both 'within ACE' pathways and 'ACE to other provider' pathways. Pathway planning is embedded in a complex and well-developed community-based service that is in touch with its community and other agencies and organisations. These may be called community development models.

This is often found in community centres which aim to provide a comprehensive social, educational and employment program. The model is distinguished by its outward looking view of the community. There is an 'integrated' approach to pathways in that pathways are created through bringing various services together. The program is based on analysis of local needs with the aim of developing and enriching the community - it is 'community based not course based'. Among other strategies, this supportive community development approach may create employment opportunities by forging links with existing local business through the development of new local businesses and provision of relevant training.

Culturally appropriate pathways

Strategies to develop pathways for indigenous women to VET have to recognise the great diversity of their situations and cultures. While negotiating culturally appropriate arrangements is crucial for indigenous women's access and equity, it is important to note that it applies as a general principle in developing pathways for all other groups, especially but not only women who are from language backgrounds other than English. Good practice takes into account the cultural, social, economic and political situation of the participants, where providers are working to counter oppression, not simply disadvantage.

Similarly, there can be specific programs for equity target groups. The organising principle is one of responding to the educational or employment needs of a particular equity target group, designing an appropriate program and making available appropriate support and resources to ensure success.

Statewide strategies

Numerous system or state-wide strategies can facilitate pathways. A state or regional agency can play a role in smoothing the progression of students from ACE to TAFE by making credit transfer arrangements explicit and clear. This approach includes credit transfer and recognition of prior learning approaches.

Open learning as pathway strategy

Larger states, with many small communities geographically remote from main centres and their VET providers, have been developing open learning approaches to extend women's options for VET. Elsewhere, the potential for bringing together small and isolated communities through 'telecentres' is being realised through telecommunications technology.

Interactive communication tools, such as audio graphics conferencing, can be used to give isolated women access to training programs allowing them to return to the work force. An important feature of the system is that education and training activities may originate from any location, enabling and empowering small and large communities to deliver as well as receive courses. New communication can support strategies to overcome barriers to women's access to appropriate VET based in their own localities.

Unpaid worker to VET training

This pathway is often successful because it involves women having the opportunity to give back to their local community. These women want to be "useful" and to learn the skills to enable them to carry out the tasks required, although they may not see themselves as "employable" due to low self esteem or lack of training. Involvement in unpaid work and the related non-accredited training can lead women to have a changed view of themselves as well as opening up opportunities for future work and training.

Factors promoting pathways

The research provided further insight into what conditions and practices facilitate the development of pathways from ACE to VET for women. This information adds to the already significant wealth of case studies of good practice in adult and community education (eg Bulletin of Good Practice, 1995; Bradshaw, 1995; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996; Coventry and Higginson, 1996).

One conclusion is that *pathway planning is facilitated where it is an integral part of community-based practice*. Pathways are most readily arranged by providers who are responding to the needs of their communities by providing a range of options, and where they understand pathways development from ACE in a holistic way. That is to say, a pathway is only in a limited sense setting up an arrangement to link one course to another. It is much more about setting up options for learners and assisting them to take the directions which they feel ready to take on the strength of their learning.

For this reason the 'community development' model is highlighted as the most comprehensive and best developed approach to planning pathways from ACE to VET. Pathways are developed from the range of services and experiences, they are learner pathways. There are other simpler models which are also very effective in creating pathways, and these are again highlighted in discussing guiding principles and effective practices.

In the first section of the report it was argued that an 'ACE course' should be primarily understood as any course delivered by an ACE organisation - that is, a community-owned and community-managed adult education provider. The reason for the need for this clarification will now be clear, as it is integral to the argument that pathway development is most likely to be a standard feature of ACE practice where ACE organisations are developing their potential as community-based organisations within a broad system of education and training. This is the case in states where ACE organisations are recognised and supported. Where ACE organisations are not recognised as a sector within the state system, this potential is diminished.

Thus, with other researchers in other recent projects (eg Sharpe and Robertson, 1996), and now the Senate Standing Committee in its second major report on ACE (SCEET, 1997) this report argues that the recognition and support of ACE (and cooperative arrangements between ACE and VET as two independent but complementary and related systems) are the most important conditions for fully developing the potential of both ACE and VET to create pathways for women to VET and most particularly for disadvantaged women.

Guiding principles for developing pathways

The range of models for pathway development makes it possible to state some broad principles which will facilitate the development of pathways. Some of these are systemic principles, such as:

- formally recognise ACE organisations within the state training system, for their contribution to pathway development through provision of access, prevocational and vocational training programs
- include ACE providers within the delivery of VET in the state by encouraging accreditation and access as VET providers ,to public training funds
- codify arrangements on a regional or system-wide basis to facilitate both the transfer of credit from ACE to VET and the recognition of prior learning
- include ACE providers in the development of open learning and flexible delivery policies and planning

Another set of principles has become evident in the process of describing the different 'models' of pathway development reported in the previous section. These 'models' of good practice often incorporate a range of principles which might assist other providers to develop pathways for women. In many cases, as previously suggested, these are part and parcel of good practice in community adult education. They put special emphasis on customisation of provision to meet the needs of learners.

Pathway planning is facilitated where providers -

- engage in responsive provision to their communities as the basis of pathway planning [**community responsiveness**]
- develop customised training packages at the local level to meet the needs of specific groups of learners [**localisation**]
- understand pathway entry points in terms of a range of options and experiences available to learners, and do not limit pathways to linkages between formal courses [**informality**]
- assist learners to assess their educational and life experiences, needs and goals in defining pathway options [**individualisation**]
- design the timing, venue, process, activities and tutoring to reflect the needs and goals of individuals from the target group [**adaptation**]
- integrate adult literacy and vocational training, rather than make completion of literacy a barrier to vocational learning [**integration**]
- develop training which targets the preferred local employment of a group of learners and offer relevant and practical training, including accredited courses [**vocation**]
- develop partnerships with VET providers to provide a greater range of accredited courses and maximise the vocational options for learners [**collaboration**]
- network with other community agencies to ensure that participation in courses is supported by appropriate services [**networking**]

- negotiate culturally appropriate pathways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and for other cultural groups **[cultural appropriateness]**
- develop packages of funding from a variety of sources to create flexible, responsive pathways **[resourcefulness]**
- exploit the development of open and flexible learning approaches and technologies to promote pathway options particularly for women in remote communities **[access]**

Some issues for consideration

This final section draws attention to a number of issues for consideration in the development of policy and practice.

- The importance of strong government support for ACE

The bulk of examples from Victoria point to the positive effects of strong government policy support for ACE providers and for VET in ACE providers together with resources invested in strategic policy and planning, quality assurance, professional development and promotion as well as program delivery. Responsive policy initiatives enable the system to meet the community - with productive outcomes. While certainly not perfect and still under resourced, the system encourages open, innovative, cooperative, multifaceted and multi resourced developments which reward awareness and networking at local, state and national levels. This is coupled with a strong network of community providers increasingly able to negotiate pathways within the state system.

- Lack of sectoral recognition inhibits pathways

Conversely, where ACE organisations are not formally recognised and supported as a sector by the state government, it is very difficult for them to perform a pathway role. That they do so at all appears serendipitous in the context of the state ACE/VET system in which they are located. Thus, where they do so, it is in spite of the lack of resources or policy inclusion from the state training authority.

Lack of sectoral recognition is a disincentive to ACE-TAFE partnerships. Where ACE has no standing, it makes it difficult for neighbourhood houses or community centres to argue that TAFE institutes should negotiate collaborative arrangements with them.

However, sectoral recognition alone does not ensure pathway development. Along with the evidence of successful partnerships, the interviews also uncovered a lack of interest by many TAFE institutes in collaboration with ACE organisations to create pathways to VET. In some ways this situation is due to the way competition for public funding of VET has been regulated by government.

- providing ACE only or primarily through the user-pays system creates an equity problem

As the literature review noted, the cost-recovery basis of ACE, whether provided through community organisations or through TAFE institutes, is a significant disincentive to equity because it excludes most disadvantaged women.

In some departments of some TAFE institutes, especially access departments, a commitment to develop a culture, processes and programs congenial to and empowering of women has had pathway outcomes. But this has not happened by chance. There is no

evidence that in itself TAFE provision of Stream 1000 courses is assisting women to identify and tread a path into VET, since there is no doubt that many factors, including the fees charged, the form of delivery, as well as the personal and social costs, limit access to equity groups. It is where TAFE institutes have an outreach provision that pathway development is most likely to occur. However, this kind of development involves processes such as advising, assessment and recognition of prior learning which are not cost-free.

- positioning of community providers in competition policy

As a generalisation, competition policy as currently understood in most states and territories is not encouraging the development of pathways from ACE to VET for disadvantaged people. Except in Victoria, the rules of competition in VET provision mean that ACE organisations have had very limited success competing for resources on the basis of their competitive strength as community organisations able to extend VET into communities. (In some states, there has been no flow of resources to ACE at all).

As noted in the literature review, ANTA is currently formulating policy to promote further competition in the training market (ANTA, 1996). ANTA has defined a concept of local 'intermediaries' who broker education and training for industry clients. This concept could very aptly describe the role ACE organisations are playing for community clients in developing pathways from ACE to VET as they open up opportunities for learners in their local communities and particularly for disadvantaged groups thereby giving individuals who lack it most, some degree of 'user-choice'.

It is possible that current thinking on competition policy in the emerging national VET system (ANTA, 1996) may result in competitive practices which raise further barriers to the development of learner pathways between ACE and VET. This research has shown that pathways for disadvantaged individuals do not result from disadvantaged learners independently exercising 'user choice'. Rather, pathways result from ACE organisations identifying opportunities, customising provision and negotiating options with individual learners.

One implication is that competitive funding which targets programs which enable disadvantaged women to exercise 'user choice' may be the most direct way to secure the pathway development desired by National Women's VET Strategy.

Thus, this report recommends that the National Women's VET Taskforce examine the effects of current ANTA competition policy in the context of state/territory interpretation of National Competition Policy, for its possible effects, both positive and negative, on the creation of pathways from ACE to VET for women, and particularly for disadvantaged women.

1. The project

In Australia, equity of access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) for women is dependent on the existence of pathways between Adult Community Education (ACE) and accredited VET courses. Large numbers of women participate in ACE, and the link between ACE and formal VET is a vital component for achieving the aims of the National Women's VET Strategy.

Women make up the large majority of participants in ACE programs and this project arose from increasing awareness in the sector that programs must reflect the diverse needs of these participants (Gribble, 1992; ACFE, 1996). There is also an increased awareness that research must produce results that are useable by providers to enable them to improve their practice.

The main objective of the project was to support the pathway planning strategies of ACE and other VET providers by building up a detailed picture of the formal and informal ACE-VET linkages and arrangements and communicating this in a user-friendly resource.

The project is a national ACE study which arises from a number of recent national ACE projects which have highlighted the need to know more about pathway planning and ways to address barriers to access (Bennink and Blackwell, 1996; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996; Coventry and Higginson, 1996). The project also builds on the growing body of recent Australian ACE research in various states, including Ducie's WA neighbourhood house research, the Outcomes and Pathways study (ACFEB, 1995), case studies of good practice in ACE (Bradshaw, 1995) and research commissioned by BACE in NSW (McIntyre et al, 1993; McIntyre et al, 1995; McIntyre et al 1997).

1.1 Objectives

The aim of the project was to investigate and document 'models or practices in states and territories that provide formal or informal pathways, linkages or articulation from non-accredited adult and community education programs to accredited programs of vocational education and training'.

A requirement was to report on the findings on ACE-VET pathways, for women in ACE generally and with specific reference to the equity target priority groups of women identified in the National Strategy.

The research was an opportunity to look at a series of key issues including the articulation and skill recognition practices used by various kinds of providers along

with guiding assumptions, principles and models. How are providers responding to educational problems and issues? What course areas and qualification levels are part of the pathways process? What are the outcomes in various regions and locations in different states? Are these outcomes relevant to the course expectations of the women concerned, especially those in the priority groups?

Another purpose of the project was to develop a comprehensive database of information about the pathway development practices of ACE and VET providers, in order to produce a Provider Handbook as a print resource for a range of providers, state authorities and other stakeholders.

1.2 Assumptions

The researchers used a number of assumptions to structure their approach to the project.

- The diversity and particularity of women's needs

  The needs of the 'priority groups' identified by the National Women's VET Strategy are diverse. The National Strategy clearly states that barriers faced by groups of women may differ, and so will their educational needs and priorities. There are also important differences in the barriers faced by women within and across these groups, for example, depending on their rural or urban location.

- State and Territory variations in ACE

  The size and nature of 'the ACE sector' varies greatly from State to State. Victoria and NSW have Boards responsible for a largely independent ACE sector, and possibly have more formalised arrangements with TAFE providers. However, in other states, TAFE has a greater role in providing ACE , while community agencies may not be recognised and supported as adult community education providers. Documenting state and regional variations in practices would be a significant aspect of the project.

- Factors affecting women's participation

  Research shows that women, particularly those qualified and employed, participate strongly in ACE general adult education courses. There is some evidence however, that the National Strategy priority groups face significant barriers in accessing ACE as well as VET. Therefore, the project looked for factors which enabled increased participation of these groups. The project tried to identify in what kinds of courses the 'priority groups' of women are participating, including literacy and specially targeted courses.

- Women's skills

  Recent research and policy has emphasised the importance of recognition of women's skills, especially those acquired in informal settings. The project was therefore on the lookout for whether pathway development included components such as credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning.

- Document 'models' of pathway planning

  Pathways are difficult to conceptualise and practitioners themselves are not always clear on the issues involved. The project aimed to contribute to developing better ways to understand the articulation of ACE and VET. To describe models,

'components' or features of pathway planning have been identified. Different 'dimensions' of an ACE-VET pathway need to be described to be helpful to participants and providers (see 1.3 and 1.4 below).

- The key place of language and literacy issues

  The researchers recognise that the priority groups of women nominated by the National Strategy will often have language and literacy learning needs. Though the project does not emphasise these issues, they will be prominent for some target groups. Adult literacy is well known as a starting point for pathways for many groups of disadvantaged women.

- Recognise that value questions are inherent in good practice

  The project, in being oriented to good practice, necessarily brought out the different meanings of the 'good' which underlie and motivate community-based practice in adult education. The value commitments of providers, for example, in assisting people to overcome barriers and access educational opportunities as adults, are a key area for discussion.

Some of these issues are explored in greater depth later in this introductory section of the report.

1.3 Scope and definitions

The main focus of this project was specified as the articulation and linkages between non-credit courses and accredited vocational courses, particularly but not exclusively where this linkage is between an ACE organisation and another recognised VET provider such as TAFE. The essential rationale for the project is that of women's transition from informal, non-credit courses to accredited vocational courses.

The project confronted numerous problems in defining the meaning of an ACE course, a vocational course and so on. As Schofield noted in her review of the role of ACE in the VET system, the term 'ACE' refers at once to a type of course, a type of organisation, an ethos and a sector of provision (Schofield, 1996). This ambiguity, while it may appear to gloss over differences, is unhelpful and has the potential to confuse the issues a project on pathways is intended to clarify.

Schofield restricted the term ACE to mean primarily *a type of organisation* - a community-owned and community-managed organisation delivering educational and other services. An 'ACE course' then refers to *any* course offered by an ACE organisation, whether accredited or not and irrespective of its stream. These definitions are reflected in this project.

This approach helps to negotiate, if it does not resolve, a number of complications:

- In some states where provision is primarily by a TAFE institute, ACE means courses *classified to Stream 1000* ('leisure and enrichment' or general adult education) ie a course that is non-vocational and non-credit (eg Queensland and WA)

- In some states, an ACE course means any course *provided by an ACE organisation*, whether accredited or non-accredited, and whether it is classified as Stream 1000 or as Stream 2000 - 4000. In those states, a non-accredited course is not automatically classified as a Stream 1000. Such a course may be classified by

providers as Stream 2000 (educational preparation such as literacy) or Stream 3000-4000. (eg a vocational course in computing or small business management).

- In some states, an ACE course may be regarded as a vocational course even if it is non-accredited, and not specifically funded by the state training authority (though it may be marginally funded through the adult education authority). In other states, mainly where ACE is offered by TAFE, the lack of accreditation of a course means it is a non-vocational course funded through cost-recovery.

- In different states, the term 'general adult education' course can be understood quite differently, and as a definition of 'ACE course' can be misleading.

These difficulties reflect institutional and cultural differences in provision which are best frankly acknowledged. The project uses the term *non-credit course* to mean a non-accredited course without regard to its Stream. Hence an ACE course is not equated with Stream 1000 (though in some states an ACE course will be limited to this) or to general adult education. The term is also not used exclusively to mean a non-vocational course, though, again, in some states it is understood to be limited to this meaning. The term *accredited course* refers to the accepted sense of a course registered with the training authority.

This approach tends to highlight the differences between States which have no recognised ACE sector independent of TAFE institutes, and those which do. However, so that the term 'ACE sector' maintains a clear meaning, it should be used to refer only to community-owned and community managed adult education organisations. Several recent reports highlight the question of formal recognition of community adult education providers as the key to development of the sector (eg Ducie, 1994,27; Bennink and Blackwell, 1996).

However, the objective of this project is to document a broad and comprehensive selection of examples of good practice in establishing pathways for women. Differences among the states are accommodated by recognising the variety of institutional arrangements. Table 1.1 suggests that there will be different types of pathways depending on the configuration of the VET system in each state, referring to both types of course and types of organisation. There are three types of articulation which it was expected the research would find:

- *The ACE provider -VET provider pathway.* This is a pathway from a course in an ACE organisation to an accredited VET course with a VET provider such as TAFE. The project expected that this pathway would be commonly found in NSW and Victoria where an independent ACE sector is recognised by government, but also may be found in other states where community organisations link their courses to TAFE and other VET providers.

- *The within-ACE pathway.* This is a pathway from a non-credit course to an accredited VET course *within an ACE organisation.* The participant makes a transition from non-credit to credit course within an ACE provider. This is possible in NSW and Victoria where accredited VET courses are offered by ACE providers.

- *The within TAFE pathway.* This is a pathway from a non-credit (Stream 1000) course in TAFE to an accredited course in TAFE (eg Stream 2000 or 3000). This pathway may be found in those states where most ACE provision (ie non-credit courses) is offered by TAFE because there is no recognised ACE sector (though there

may be community organisations offering courses). There are 'within provider' pathways in other VET providers such as industry training bodies.

Table 1 Types of linkages by course and organisation

	Organisation focus	
Linkage	ACE	VET provider
1. ACE organisation to accredited VET provider	From non-credit course in ACE ...	... to accredited course in another accredited VET provider such as TAFE
2. Within ACE	From non-credit course to accredited course within ACE	
3. Within other accredited provider		From non-credit course to an accredited course within the provider eg TAFE, private college
4. ACE to other accredited provider	From accredited course in ACE ...	To accredited VET course in another provider
5. Within ACE accredited	From one credit course to another within ACE	

The main intention of the project is to examine how ACE organisations linking to TAFE may facilitate the entry of women, especially women in the equity target groups, into formal VET. Thus, the main focus is on the transition from non-credit to credit courses made through a linkage of ACE and TAFE organisations (first pathway type). However, pathways such as the second or fourth are also important.

1.4 Features of pathways

Another theme is how to describe pathways. Pathways may have many features (Table 1.2). Pathway types are influenced by the nature of the state VET and ACE systems and the extent of ACE which affects the kind of arrangements that can be made between organisations and whether the arrangement is formal or explicit. Important factors include the type of course, its field and stream of study, its duration and whether it is accredited. Pathways depend a great deal on the vocational and other needs of the women involved, as well as the nature of the community, its social composition, employment and so on. Finally, a model may have various processes or components which address structural, resource or information barriers (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996; Bennink and Blackwell, 1996).

Table 2. Features of pathway analysis

Feature	Description
Pathway type	Is the pathway from ACE-TAFE or within TAFE or within ACE?
State and sector context	Is the pathway cross-sectoral or intra-organisational?
Course type	What are the course major field of study classifications of the courses? eg health, arts, humanities etc
Target group	What particular 'target group' of women are involved and what are their characteristics?
Strategy or model	What rationale is the pathway built on? eg credit transfer, recognition of prior learning. What components and services are involved?
Arrangements	How formal or explicit is the arrangement or agreement between organisations, how is it documented?
Processes	What processes are involved - who initiated the arrangement, and what services are offered to assist students?
Barriers	What structural, resource or information barriers are being addressed?

These were some of the key questions which underpinned the design of the interview schedule and reporting on the models.

1.5 Good practice in ACE

The project includes documentation of good practice in pathway planning. This raised questions about what rationales are relevant for judging 'good practice' in ACE.

To illuminate the different meanings of the 'good' which underlie and motivate community-based practice in adult education,the researchers looked to the concept of 'good practice' in adult community education outlined cogently by Delia Bradshaw in her collection of case studies, *Multiple Images, Common Threads* (Bradshaw, 1995, 133-138). She argues that good practice should not be narrowed to the technical and methodological aspects, but should look to the 'why' of the curriculum, 'the site where learning is determined', 'where all the forces and factors that want to have a say in education intersect', influencing all other aspects of practice.

Judging 'good practice' means looking closely at what 'good' the curriculum assumes - what individual and social benefits it promises. It cannot be assumed that any one educational theory or policy position in itself delivers 'good practice'. Questions about 'the good' are not simple:

> They are questions that force us to identify the values inherent in any particular example of curriculum, to determine whether they are 'good' values, to analyse them in relation to other possible 'goods', to decide whether some 'goods' are better than others and to justify those decisions. In other words, 'good' is an ethically and politically loaded concept, a heavily value-laden term, with as many definitions as there are people and positions.
>
> So, determining criteria for good practice comes down to describing which visions of individual and social 'good' are the most desirable ones and which practices realise those 'goods'. This means it is not possible to talk exclusively about

> methodology, the 'how'; it means that it is imperative to talk also of the philosophy, the 'why'. (1995, 134)

Bradshaw argues that documenting good practice must take account of the world of values found in the 'ethos' of provision and judge how individual rights are situated in relation to the collective good, because the curriculum is intended to have both individual and social benefits. Criteria for good practice (regarding the what, the how, the who and the where) then follow from the fundamental values enacted in the curriculum:

> ... the 'why' of curriculum, given its all-pervasive influence, deserves primacy of place. As everything else, the what, the how, the who and the where are determined by the why, it is the key determinant of what makes for good practice. If the why is narrow and shallow, so too will be the inputs, the processes and the outcomes. If the why is broad and deep, so too will be the inputs, the process and the outcomes. In many documents on curriculum, the who, where, and less often, the how, feature prominently, sometimes even exclusively. Many seem to ignore the why. For all the reasons cited it is vital that the why, the philosophical and ethical justification is given its rightful place of honour in discussions and decisions about good practice curriculum (1995, 138).

Some important guidelines for the current project came from this analysis. First, the educational and social values of particular 'models' of pathway planning are an important feature, not a peripheral one. Second, the relative worth of a pathway model may be contested among curriculum stakeholders who are involved in defining the 'why' and in judging its worth. Issues of ownership and accountability which Bradshaw states are critical, are brought up by the cross-sectoral focus of pathway planning. Third, the matter of 'good practice' in ACE will inevitably and rightly raise questions about the values and philosophies within the vocational education and training system, and whether that system is sufficiently acknowledging the contribution of community-based adult education provision and the 'goods' which it delivers.

Delia Bradshaw wrote that -

> ... good practice means contributing to individual and social well-being, simultaneously attending to vocational, personal, family, community and social goals and outcomes, then good practice simply has to include a judicious attentiveness to the claims, needs and demands of all the stakeholders. In the final analysis, when the choice is made between all the contending stakeholders, this paper concludes that it is imperative those making the choice can clearly justify on ethical and philosophical grounds as well as on historical and political ones, the particular conglomeration of interests favoured (1995, 138).

1.6 The 'pathway' concept

Having suggested some parameters of pathway development that were taken into account, it is also useful to explore the 'pathway' idea through a semiotic analysis.

Pathway is a powerful metaphor for educational transition. While it is usual to define the meaning of a concept in one clear way, this can limit understanding of the different meanings 'pathways' have in practice. It is possible to uncover many associations which are brought into play in policy rhetoric, educational practice and everyday conversation.

The Shorter Oxford suggests that both *path* and *way* are words of ancient origin in English, while *pathway* is a more recent (sixteenth century) usage. It defines a path as 'a way beaten or trodden by the feet of men [sic] or beasts not expressly planned and constructed ...' While this definition excludes women from the path-treading, it does highlight that a *pathway* is simply a way from one place to another, usually made by walking, a way made or found but not 'expressly planned and constructed' as is a road. Thus the educational meaning of 'pathway' as a linking of two educational locations or institutions or types of experiences, but a linking that is somewhat informal and, as it were, established by individuals making the path by going upon it.

Thus, the path may have been made by *pathfinders* who may have had *to find their way* (through a dark wood, by winding and uneven way, perhaps confronting dangers or uncertainties). Thus *barriers or obstacles* may be encountered on a path and a way has to be found around or over them, hence a path is rarely straight. Barriers may be found at the end of a path - thus pathfinders may have 'beaten a path' to the door of a college or school, yet find their way denied. Thus educational pathways are also associated with questions of *access* to institutional spaces, of finding a way through gates which may be locked or doors barred (or it may be that the path itself is 'a way out' after being confined, being shut up or shut in).

Though a path may be well-trodden, it may still have difficulties to overcome. The pathway may exist, but it still has to be taken, and thus pathway also suggests *travelling* or *journeying*. Qualities of wayfaring, of venturing out or even *ad*-venturing are implied. *Venturing* in turn suggests a certain openness to experience and preparedness to face possible uncertainties, risks or even dangers, (though an educational pathway implies a good deal more certainty about experience than other forms of travelling). But if a pathway entails a kind of *journeying*, then the experience may mean moving on, some personal change, *setting out on a search* for a new life or leaving behind an old identity (a path which leads who knows where).

A path has an element of *choice and direction* - the way is not an aimless wandering but a purposing ('two roads diverged in a wood and I / took the one less travelled by' in Frost's well-known lines). Thus we say *via* a path, by way of such a place. In Frost's poem, the choice was equal enough, but the way taken made 'all the difference'. Yet the choice once made leads to certain experiences on the 'road taken' but also a foregoing of other options or experiences by other ways.

Inevitably, the taking of an educational path has elements of a life-choice, invested with hope (or possibly fear, or other feelings). It may mean, to the educational traveller, *progress* from one degree of knowledge to another - a path perhaps taken with the intention to change one-self for the better, even a *rite de passage*, or life transition. Thus a path may be felt to be onward and upward (or downward, Shakespeare's 'primrose way to the everlasting bonfire'). Thus path may be Path as philosophical Way, or *Tao*, and thus a way taken 'on faith' or by conviction.

An educational pathway inevitably has such undercurrents of meaning, implies a journeying to higher understanding, leading to (old-fashioned?) ideas of education as *morally uplifting* or enlightening. Such meanings may even be pressed to the venturing learner - 'this path is good for you, it is better for you if you go in this direction and have these experiences'. Organised learning in its nature presumes some such benefits, anticipates some worthwhile outcome, so that some value is implicated in the choice of an educational pathway.

Pathway also has many meanings associated with the *mapping of routes*, or ways to journey from one place to another. A pathway may be 'made out' from some vantage point above, or a pathway may exist as an experience recalled and remembered, made out in retrospect (seen from where we have come). A path once traversed may be described by landmarks and bearings, or be a path difficult to make out, a path become track, a 'trackless way', that leads to the walker 'getting bushed' so that a way forward soon becomes a way back. Thus educational paths may be more or less familiar, conventional or unconventional. Similarly, taking a pathway requires an orientation of some kind, knowing a direction to take (what way forward), and in the going, the path will be understood in terms of current reckoning of 'where we are' - as other directions, options, choices open up from a point reached.

A pathway implies, as first suggested, an arrival - at some institutional door where *gatekeepers* may want some proof of identity and the credentials of the arrival, implying some judgements both of the traveller and of the way come. For the journeying learner, the new educational experiences will bring new frames of reference by which old knowledge and understandings and attitudes will be examined anew - perhaps to conclude that 'the end of all our exploring / will be to arrive where we started / and know the place for the first time' (Eliot).

And if there is no path marked out, how is the journeying done? What resources and skills are required to make a way with no landmarks to tell the way? What equipment is needed and who might help as a guide?

This brief examination of the semiotics of 'pathway' suggests that there are several key meanings implied in the metaphor especially when it is used to describe access by women in adult and vocational education. A pathway can be -

- the making of connections or linkages by learners between one institutional location and another, one kind of learning experience and another
- the overcoming of obstacles or barriers along the way, including an institutional or gateway barriers
- a choice of direction regarding an educational experience, implying an orientation to learning, as well as qualities of venturing
- a metaphor of learning as personal journey and search for meaning
- a progression to higher knowledge or learning, following 'the way' to go
- a map that can be used to guide learners along a learning route

There are potential conflicts or tensions between these meanings. While the route to learning may be mapped out, there may still be difficulties that have to be negotiated by anyone using the path; the choice of a direction does not mean that the learner is always confident that the choice was right; the path may seem simply to link two institutions or types of course, but may demand a progression of the learner that was not expected; or if the learner expected a higher order of learning, the pathway may not deliver this expectation. Pathways may exist, but in a sense have to be continually remade by people treading them. While pathfinders have opened doors for other learners, gatekeepers can shut them fast.

Pathways also imply assumptions about what directions are good for women or men and how they best decide on these directions. Pathways from non-credit to accredited courses are seen as important because they achieve for the participant tangible gains in terms of some educational good such as skills, knowledge, understanding or competence. Understanding how people come to take their path is an important role for those involved with education.

1.7 Project methodology

The project was carried out over seven months from October 1996 to May 1997 and involved the following processes:

- **Literature review**. The researchers completed an extensive review of recent research on ACE to establish what is known about pathways and skills recognition practices for women participating in ACE. Aspects of the policy context which affect ACE's ability to develop pathways were considered (section 2 of the report).

- **Telephone interviews**. The researchers identified ACE organisations and VET providers in both rural and urban regions within different states and territories which were consciously developing pathways from ACE to VET. The researchers built on their knowledge of ACE networks (regional ACE contacts, program managers and so on) and information gleaned from policy makers in the ACE and VET sectors in each state and territory to identify these providers who were sent letters inviting participation in a structured telephone interview to document their pathway 'models' and practices. Where, on just a few occasions, the interviewee was not available for the interview, a questionnaire was sent inviting them to outline the development, structure and process of their pathway model. Project resources set a limit of between 50 - 80 interviews from many more initial contacts. The interviewing took place mainly in February and March 1997 due to the peak periods of provider activity at the end and beginning of the year.

- **Database development**. The project recorded and analysed information from the interviews in a systematic way by developing a comprehensive database using Claris Filemaker Pro version 3. The Filemaker Pro database is a very suitable tool for managing qualitative analysis since it is possible to graphically design the entry, display and analysis of information from a large number of interviews, as well as to use the material to produce a print resource for providers.

- **Provider Handbook.** The database was used to produce a print resource for use in planning pathways in ACE and VET organisations. Layouts were designed to present information in an accessible and graphically interesting form. The database was also used to develop several indexes to the Handbook.

- **Provider consultation.** The information obtained from the interviews with providers was supplied to them for checking, and selected providers included in the Handbook were asked to give feedback.

The researchers were greatly assisted in the development of the project by members of the national Steering Committee through monthly teleconferences.

2. Research on ACE and pathways

More than a decade of research has contributed to policy and research literature on the outcomes of adult community education in Australia. This literature refers in many places to the role of ACE in providing pathways for women from non-formal to accredited courses and vocational training.

A number of significant themes emerge, culminating in the recent national ACE projects which have concentrated on the question of pathways and barriers and led directly to the current project (Bennink and Blackwell, 1995; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996).

These themes are, in summary:

- awareness that women are the majority of participants in ACE has not led to a comparable emphasis in policy and research on how ACE should provide for particular groups of women
- the emergence of the pathways question in research prior to the first Senate Report, and the attention it is now receiving
- evidence from participation surveys, that general adult education courses attract relatively advantaged participants and play a less significant role in providing pathways for disadvantaged women than was thought to be the case
- evidence of the extent of the barriers to participation for many disadvantaged people which need to be addressed by specific strategies, to achieve equity outcomes
- evidence that while recognition of ACE by the ANTA agreement has allowed ACE providers in some states to expand into accredited VET courses, thus increasing the number of pathways available to disadvantaged women, while in other ways, the new arrangements are impeding the potential of community providers to achieve equity outcomes
- evidence that current ANTA thinking about VET competition policy and the 'training market' presents a limited understanding of disadvantage and pays little regard to the role of community providers and their potential to deliver equity outcomes through pathways

The following review will explore the policy emphasis on women, and ACE as a pathway to VET for them as it emerged in research up to the first Senate Report in 1991. The evidence for ACE's pathway role found in recent ACE participation research

is examined in order to open up the question of pathways from ACE to VET within the national system, the question of barriers in planning pathways from ACE to VET and the effect of VET 'competition policy' on achieving equity through pathways.

This review does not canvas the many references to the needs of the 'target equity groups', each of which has its own literature, for example, strategies appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples (Coles, 1994; Teasdale and Teasdale, 1996; McIntyre et al, 1996), or for rural and isolated women (Mageean, 1988; Hansen, 1991; Cameron and Griffith, 1992; Lawrence, Butler and Kempnich, 1996; NBEET,1991,1995).

2.1 Women, ACE and VET

The National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (ANTA 1994) states that women continue to be under-represented in vocational education and training. It notes that women in the workforce do less external training than men and have less support by employers for training. As a result they are less likely than men to participate in training, have a smaller share of the training dollar and carry a higher proportion of the cost of their own training. This is reflected in many documents (eg Barnett, 1993; ACFEB, 1995; Bennink and Blackwell, 1995; Lundberg and Cleary, 1995).

In an important discussion of women's participation in adult community education, the ACFE Board of Victoria mentions the contradiction that while research and policy has often noted that women are predominant in ACE, specific strategies to meet the needs of female clienteles are rarely developed or followed through. The first Senate Report is singled out in this respect (1996,8). The point has been made before in numerous places (eg Gribble, 1991, 1992).

This paper aims to reach an understanding of the participation of women in ACE in the light of a period of intense policy and research activity. A labour market perspective is illuminating. The marked changes in the nature of women's labour force participation may be in turn influencing women's high participation in adult education - particularly the fact that women's increased share of paid employment since the 1960s (currently 50% of all women) has occurred almost entirely in part-time jobs. More significant, the existing gender segregation of the workforce is a challenge for ACE. There are potentially strong areas of demand for VET from women employed in the traditional health and community services and clerical and sales areas, and at the same time a need to provide educational services for women breaking into non-traditional occupations (1996, 7-8).

The Victorian document recognises that a competitive training market provides crucial opportunities for ACE providers to identify women as their 'key market' and consciously to tailor specific services to meet the needs of different groups of women.

Posing the question 'How can adult education best ensure that it is accurately informed about demand for its courses and that its courses are most effective in meeting the demands of existing and future markets?' the document reasserts the key role of ACE in providing pathways from informal courses to VET:

> Adult education must ensure continuation of informal access into learning for women. This informal provision must have child care facilities in easy reach. Equally it must effectively support and encourage women to enter accredited pathways as an outcome of participation in informal learning. This is a difficult challenge since

there is now evidence that the sector is best attracting into vocational education and training options those who have employment and qualifications. Those who have neither employment nor qualifications, those who are most socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged, will be in danger of being permanently excluded if informal learning opportunities are not provided through adult education in the community. But it is also the case that they will be excluded if there is not a commitment on the part of adult educators to ensure that taking on accredited study is an option for all (1996, 8).

2.2 ACE research before the 1991 Senate Report

Adult and community education developed rapidly during the 1980's particularly in Victoria and NSW. With this growth came a challenge from funding agencies for ACE providers to demonstrate the social and economic worth of the sector (Saleeba and Benson, 1984; Kimberley 1986; Collins and Moore, 1989). As the pace of training reform accelerated, so did demands for this evidence. By the 1990s ACE was being pressed to demonstrate the nature and extent of its vocational outcomes (AAACE, 1992; McIntyre et al, 1993; ACFEB, 1995; Ducie, 1994; McIntyre et al, 1995).

The earlier studies demonstrated the social and economic relevance of adult education and discounted the view that adult education could simply be defined as 'leisure and personal enrichment' and therefore of marginal importance. Much of this work drew attention to the predominance of women in ACE.

Thus Saleeba and Benson's 1984 study for the Victorian TAFE Board provided a comprehensive picture of the role of community learning in Victoria as a 'public investment'. The study emphasised that more people become involved in formal study via community providers and their courses than through any other means. The concept of 'pathways' from ACE courses has been a major theme of outcomes research ever since. Saleeba and Benson reported providers' claims that 77% of students returned for further courses, 32% of students moved on to more formal courses and 23% of students moved on to more vocational study.

Similarly, Kimberley's study of outcomes for the Victorian TAFE Authority (Kimberley, 1986) argued that effective vocational education needed a broad concept of 'outcome' and as well as to recognise processes by which people find direction. The under-educated could find a way into formal vocational education through the non-formal and flexible experiences provided by ACE. Community providers took a holistic view of vocational education and were able to link vocational preparation with general education and the development of life skills.

A survey of providers showed that over a third of participants went on to further education, and 51% of women who enrolled in TAFE programs did this via community provided courses. More significantly, the study reported some 50 case studies of individual learners which illustrated the pathways participants followed from ACE courses to employment, further education or training.

Other research highlighted the high rates of participation by Australian women in adult education (Gribble, 1991; 1992). Gribble called for research to investigate the gender factor in ACE participation and remedy the 'dearth of information about the age, family responsibilities, choice of subjects and courses, financial circumstances and motivation of women participants' (Gribble, 1991,150). She concludes that women have generally been poorly serviced by much of this provision. Community-based provision,

on the other hand, has made adult education more attractive to women whom Gribble refers to as its 'invisible owners'.

Other studies have argued that the existence of community networks is a crucial means of support for women's re-entry to learning. Rural adult education programs, for example, highlight the particular needs of rural women returning to study. Dorsman and Kimberley (1990) found that rural women depended on community networks to generate mutual support for their return to study, and that this was a key to their access to post-secondary education.

The contribution of community-based adult education to women's entry to vocational education was further explored in the AAACE study of skill formation through ACE (AAACE, 1992). This reinforced Kimberley's findings. Across all ACE providers, the study found that apart from the development of a range of expected skills (eg. in personal development), generic skill development was also apparent, particularly in communication, planning, problem-solving, organisational and supervision skills. The earlier work has led ACE in the direction of a greater emphasis on systems designed to recognise and document prior learning. (eg Bennink and Blackwell, 1995:30).

The earlier period of work on the role of ACE in the larger system concludes with the historic report of the Senate Inquiry into adult community education (SSCEET, 1991). This report drew on the earlier literature but noted the lack of substantial research on the achievements of the sector, concluding

> It is clear that the adult and community education sector has no cause to shrink from attempts to measure its achievements. On the contrary, there is much to be gained in documenting its activities in rigorous, analysable fashion (SSCEET, 1991, 86).

The Senate Inquiry took up the theme of pathways and amplified it, arguing that ACE

> 'has an important compensatory or second chance role whereby people overcome skill deficiencies, remedy shortcomings in previous formal education and training and receive social and cultural benefits previously denied them' (SSCEET, 1991:8).

2.3 Research on ACE participation and pathways

As the first Senate report noted, the evidence for the role of ACE has tended to be anecdotal. There have been few large scale studies providing more analytic evidence of the role of ACE in providing pathways. Since the first Senate report's call for such research, there has been a wealth of new information about ACE participants and the outcomes of their participation.

A recent national Issues Paper which explored in more detail issues in developing pathways from ACE to VET (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996) concluded that the evidence suggests that:

> A significant percentage of ACE students can be identified as moving from the ACE sector to the VET sector and that many have succeeded in finding their own pathway to do so though there are problems in determining just how significant this is (p.11).

While the sentiment is that ACE has a key role in making pathways to further education, the broad participation picture is one of the non-participation of disadvantaged groups. Further, the research has concentrated on the ACE sector in

NSW and Victoria, and says little about the activity of other states. Truly national research has been lacking.

An exception is the participation data from the National Social Science Survey program (Evans, 1988;1993). This helped to sharpen the research focus on ACE and was used to lobby for greater recognition of ACE. In retrospect, the surveys were flawed, especially in confounding adult community education with other types of 'adult education' provision including TAFE. The data thus over-states the extent of ACE participation and as a result it does not have clear messages about pathways from ACE to VET.

A number of sample-surveys have since provided a clearer picture of ACE provision. The first Senate report led to a three-state study (ACFEB, 1993). *Outcomes and Pathways* surveyed participants identified by providers as having done a course in 1992. The sample represented courses of different types in a range of community providers of different sizes and locations in three states, a broader reach than that of the NSW studies.

This study also has more to say about pathways from ACE to VET than any other piece of recent research (ACFEB, 1995, 48), for example:

- Relatively low proportions of people *had expected* that their 1992 ACE courses would prepare them to study at a tertiary institution (7%) or assist with present studies (9%) or had assisted them to undertake another ACE course (14%).
- Some 9% reported that the course had *actually helped* them 'prepare for study at university, TAFE college or other institution', and some 15% went on to study some kind of formal qualification (1995, 49).
- The courses with the largest proportions of people going on to study some formal qualification (within ACE or elsewhere) were found in the access courses (24% of participants) and vocational education courses (19%). It is notable that the proportions were lower for ESL and basic education courses.
- In comparison, some 20% said they were 'assisted to prepare for another ACE course' and 42% went on to study another ACE course. The proportion of all age groups preparing for another ACE course is similar across the age range.
- Among the 15-24 year old age group, the proportion assisted with studies other than TAFE is highest, 24% being helped with tertiary study and 24% with current studies, though this age group constitutes a small minority (some 7% of participants).

Since more said they were *actually helped* with further study than they *expected to be*, this research suggests that pathway facilitation was not a high priority for the majority of participants. However, it is not known from the survey to what extent different groups of women might be represented in this information about preparation for study towards a formal qualification.

It is clear, however, that adult basic education and ESL participants (which included larger numbers of disadvantaged women either lacking qualifications or who were seeking employment) were rather less likely than others to proceed to formal study. A larger proportion of non-English speaking background participants than other participants were assisted in some way with another course, but a relatively lower

percentage of non-English speaking background participants in ESL courses went on to a formal qualification as distinct from doing more ESL courses (1995, 51). Unemployed students showed a much higher level of assistance with another course, with some 20% going on to some formal qualification, though the published data do not give a breakdown of the women represented in this group.

Unfortunately, there is little information about the extent to which outcomes are achieved by women with disadvantages in employment and/or qualification. It is not possible to conclude whether outcomes such women gained were from their course or if they were assisted on a pathway of any kind compared to other women. Similarly, there is little or no information about the target equity groups and the extent to which they were represented in this sample (or in the other studies reported). Thus it is not possible to know, even in a sketchy way, what proportions of culturally and linguistically diverse women, rural isolated women or indigenous women, are represented in the different types of courses or in the sub-sample that could be called 'disadvantaged in employment or qualification'.

The research for the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education (McIntyre, Morris and Tennant, 1993; McIntyre, Foley, Morris and Tennant, 1995) was narrower in scope than the ACFE three-state study, focusing on general adult education courses (those advertised to the public as opposed to targeted programs) which in 1996 made up two-thirds of the activity of NSW ACE providers. The two large scale sample-surveys confirmed the predominance of women in general adult education courses and established that their participants are relatively advantaged in terms of education and employment. For example -

- In the *Vocational Scope of ACE* survey, 63% of men and 55% of women were both qualified *and* employed. Only 7% of women and 2% of males were *neither* employed nor qualified
- In the *ACE Works* survey, 73% of females were in work of some kind and 63% held some form of post-school qualification. Some 10% of women were *neither* employed nor qualified.

To some extent, the sampling in these surveys reflects the dominance of the large NSW evening and community colleges which carry out three-quarters of the activity of the Board-recognised 'main providers'. It is possible that smaller providers have a less-advantaged profile, though the surveys did not suggest this. Broad surveys tend to obscure important differences in the profiles of localities.

Research therefore suggests that women in the target equity groups, many of whom are neither in the workforce nor qualified, are a small minority in general adult education. However, these courses may be performing an important function for women in the workforce and a significant component of this function is vocational in motive and outcome (McIntyre et al, 1995, 45). *ACE Works* carried out an occupational analysis of the employed participants represented in both surveys. The employed, professional, para-professional and clerical occupations are over-represented, with managerial, administrative and sales occupations comparable in the three states. Unskilled men and women are poorly represented.

These findings are reinforced by national data collected through household survey by the ABS for the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (McIntyre

and Crombie, 1996). This shows the general trend for the employed and the qualified to participate in adult learning in short courses *of any kind* - some 60% of which appears to be conducted in the workplace rather than institutions. ACE has only 10% of short course activity.

The two NSW studies quantified the extent to which participants planned to continue their study in a future course in TAFE or a university or other institution. Some three-quarters of *The Vocational Scope of ACE* survey participants - a strikingly high figure - indicated that they intended to enrol in a future course. Of these 1629 individuals, 80% responded that this course was likely to be in an ACE centre, 11% in a TAFE college, 3% in a university and 5% through some other provider. Moreover, the vast majority of these participants had taken a course of some kind before, with some 70% having taken from one to five courses in the last five years.

Given these data on employment and qualification of general course participants, and on the extent of continuing participation in ACE general courses, it is not surprising that for many women, ACE is not a starting point but a terminus. The pathway for many ACE participants is from formal study, following a qualification, to informal study in an ACE course, rather than from an ACE course to a formal qualification.

If this is so, then the question arises as to how ACE courses provide a pathway for women less advantaged than those who typically use ACE, and what kinds of courses and under what circumstances ACE provides a pathway to formal VET.

2.4 Pathways, equity and funding

Recent research has shown that the type of course studied is linked to the educational and employment profile of ACE participants. In the ACFEB study, 47% of the 2388 participants had been employed at the time of the 1992 course, with 9% unemployed and 42% not in the workforce (ACFEB, 1995, 27-29). However, the proportions of employed people were much lower in adult basic education (38%) and ESL courses (15%) and highest in access (50%), general adult education (46%) and 'vocational education' courses (60%). The proportion of those holding a post-school qualification was highest in general adult education (54%), vocational education (47%) and access courses (44%) and lowest in adult basic education and ESL courses.

It is clear that targeted programs such as literacy and ESL are more likely to have greater numbers of people who lack access to both education and employment.

Taken together, the implication of the recent surveys on participation in ACE is that large groups of women in the target equity groups are *unlikely* to be using general adult education courses as pathways to accredited VET courses, and that these pathways are *more likely* to begin from targeted programs that are specifically funded to achieve employment or educational outcomes for groups of learners with specific needs.

Hence, the research suggests increased participation in ACE by equity groups, and the creation of pathways for them from ACE to VET is more likely to be achieved through targeted funding regimes and programs, such as the labour market programs funded by the Commonwealth up to 1996 or the Victorian equity program or the NSW ACE literacy program, than through general courses.

As funding agencies have been quick to recognise, ACE will best serve the needs of specific groups of women. This requires a differentiation of educational provision through appropriately funded equity strategies.

Recent research for the NSW Board has shown how existing funding regimes, in concert with the development of a 'user-pays' system over the last decade, may actually have discouraged participation by women in equity groups, at least in general courses. To the extent that ACE providers have to market ACE courses to survive financially, they target *relatively advantaged clientele* concentrated in particular localities and who have a given capacity to pay for the kinds of courses they want at a given price (McIntyre, Brown and Ferrier, 1997).

Hence both the types of courses and their ethos and delivery will tend to reflect the needs of advantaged participants rather than the particular needs of different equity groups or the particular needs of such groups in particular localities. Few localities have the required levels of affluence to support this provision and few providers can fund equity objectives from generated surpluses, and in any case are unlikely to do so if this is not an expectation of the funding regime. While this may be more true among the large metropolitan providers, it is the prevailing dynamic where providers choose to compete by selling general courses rather than seeking funding that is specifically equity targeted, whether from the state government or from Commonwealth programs.

Studies in other states (notably Ducie, 1994; Bennink and Blackwell, 1995; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996) suggest that other factors may be operating in different circumstances. The community context and the size and culture of the provider needs to be explored more than they have been. Ducie's study of WA neighbourhood houses (Ducie, 1994) gives a detailed picture of smaller providers, linked into their communities and less driven by 'user-pays' systems than larger organisations. They may therefore be providing pathways for less advantaged women.

Ducie's study highlights the limitations of large-scale surveys in documenting the pathways followed by individuals. She focused on the course experiences of respondents who began by taking arts and crafts courses and then moved on to more focused literacy and employment-related courses. The NSW and Victorian survey research may not have done justice to the claims of smaller, community based providers such as neighbourhood houses. It is possible that smaller providers have a more inclusive profile (15% of Ducie's participants were sole parents).

Perhaps the size of ACE providers has not emerged as a factor because it has not been investigated specifically as a factor in the effectiveness in making pathways for disadvantaged groups. If this is so, future research should pay more attention to types of ACE organisations. It would be ironical if the major equity gains in ACE were being contributed by those providers who are the most poorly resourced and who are least able to generate large incomes from their marketing of general adult education courses.

Research is needed which explores the profiles of ACE providers in different socio-economic localities, and as the Issues Paper notes, so is research of a longitudinal kind that could provide better evidence about pathways (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996, 33).

This question of funding has become linked to two key issues: whether a state recognises and supports an ACE sector; and the extent to which ACE organisations have been assisted to play a role in delivering accredited VET. These questions affect how

effectively ACE can fulfil its potential as a pathway to VET for women in target equity groups.

2.5 Removing barriers to pathway development

The evidence of participation studies together with the rapid development of ACE's role in the emerging national system of VET has led the ACE sector nationally to give more attention to barriers which limit the participation of women in equity groups. Non-participation has become an issue leading to an emphasis on strategies for a 'more inclusive ACE' (Alt Stasis Associates, 1996).

If the informal learning through ACE's general courses is in fact less of an avenue to further and accredited study for disadvantaged groups, what then needs to be done to change this situation?

Two recent national projects highlighted that it is important to distinguish barriers to participation *for disadvantaged individuals* and barriers to the development of pathways *among providers* in the system and suggested a number of strategies to widen participation and remove structural and institutional barriers to the movement of learners (Bennink and Blackwell, 1995; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996).

The question of barriers to participation in ACE has recently been addressed in a national project (Bennink and Blackwell, 1995) against the background of the objectives of the National ACE Policy to achieve access and equity and 'provide diverse opportunities and outcomes for lifelong learning'.

This project described barriers as dispositional, situational and institutional in nature. For example, lack of confidence is named as the major dispositional barrier, while situational barriers include women's family commitments. Four groups of barriers were identified and strategies were formulated to address them. The project recognised that individual members of disadvantaged groups face different combinations of barriers of these kinds. Table 2.1 summarises the four groups of barriers.

The most important recommendations relevant to ACE-VET pathways included:

- non-credit learning be maintained and acknowledged in policy as a vital component of disadvantaged groups' learning pathways (p.10)
- a promotional strategy be developed to focus inter alia on information about learning pathways for disadvantaged groups, with specific information about ACE pathway to be included in TAFE promotion (p.23)
- states and territories should ensure that learning pathways are accessible to disadvantaged groups by facilitating the delivery of accredited programs by ACE providers (p.23)
- that formal regional networks of ACE providers be established in each state and territory with resourcing to ensure their viability (p.19)

Six key strategies to overcome barriers to participation were identified by the research. These are:

- Identifying local barriers for disadvantaged groups

- Involvement of the target group in planning and delivering the program
- Providing advice, counselling, tutoring and other additional support for members of disadvantaged groups
- Staff development regarding cultural, gender and disability issues for those involved in providing programs
- Ensuring that ACE providers network with other agencies in providing services for disadvantaged groups
- Ensuring that accreditation does not diminish the value of personal growth and skills development outcomes in ACE

Table 2.1
Barriers to participation in ACE

Group A	Group B
Low self-confidence	Socialisation
Inappropriate content and delivery	Lack of interest or relevance
Previous educational experiences	Family commitments
	Lack of support
Group C	**Group D**
Accessibility of facilities and services	Lack of awareness
Lack of transport	Negative image of ACE
Cost	

The national Issues Paper on ACE-VET Pathways (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996) further amplified this theme of sets of interacting barriers and conceptualised these as being of four kinds: systemic, informational, attitudinal/cultural and resource barriers.

This report crystallises the issues of recognition and support as barriers to ACE's effectiveness in building pathways. Systemic barriers - the lack of recognition of ACE - pose a basic problem. The current uneven development of ACE across the states and territories is a limiting factor that cannot be ignored in any discussion of pathways in a national context. It states:

> Systemic barriers are threshold issues, and include the lack of structures responsible for ACE provision and the inability to develop a strategic vision for ACE and pathways ... The view of Stream 1000 and access and bridging courses as poor cousins to VET is detrimental to pathways, and lack of recognition of ACE in the State Training Profile ... denies ACE recognition and funding support (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996,2).

Informational barriers to pathway development include lack of knowledge of ACE in the VET system, as well as lack of knowledge about ACE in the community. Resource barriers affect the ability of ACE providers to develop pathways which are often more demanding of facilities and staff. Resourcing is obviously linked to recognition and attitudinal issues.

The report identifies many specific strategies to address barriers to pathway development. Many of these were implied in the foregoing discussion, for example 'establishing and maintaining mechanisms by which issues about ACE/VET pathways

can be raised and dealt with as part of each state's strategic planning processes' and implementing strategies which target pathway development (1996, 32).

It is important to single out one group of strategies that has been highlighted by a national project which examined open learning in ACE (Coventry and Higginson, 1996). This report is a comprehensive analysis of ACE from the perspective of open learning, which is reflected in many aspects of community-based provision. It makes a key point regarding the difference between ACE and accredited VET - that the very formality of the latter acts against the development of open learning and flexible delivery which tends to be found in the 'learner-focused activities' of the ACE sector.

This report sums up fifteen key issues for the further development of open learning in the sector. This is valuable in highlighting how open learning is bringing together a number of key issues for ACE in the broader system, including -

- finding ways to recognise lifelong learning however it occurs
- extending accredited vocational learning into communities
- ensuring ACE has access to publicly funded curriculum and facilities
- encouraging collaborative ventures and networking with ACE
- revising funding models to de-emphasise delivery in favour of learning
- including ACE in Education Network Australia (EdNA)

If one issue were to be highlighted, it would be the potential role of ACE in extending opportunities to remote and rural communities through flexible delivery, building on the strengths of learner-centred approaches and knowledge of community-based educational practice.

This work on barriers and pathways shows that thinking about pathways needs to go well beyond 'dispositional' barriers which tend to view non-participants as lacking 'what it takes'. In developing pathways for disadvantaged people, a program needs to address the high social and economic costs they face in 'participating'. Costs are minimised by a supportive learning environment which provides advice and childcare and which is near work or home, and the benefits are more immediate than those of longer accredited courses.

The research will make a contribution to understanding how the models of community-based provision are successful in facilitating pathways to VET by addressing the high 'costs' of learning for disadvantaged individuals. But they can only do so effectively if the VET system recognises and includes ACE organisations within its scope and dismantles the systemic barriers to pathway development.

2.6 ACE in the VET system

Recent attention to the vocational role of ACE in the emerging national system has emphasised its role in providing pathways to formal study.

Barnett (1993) in *Swings and Roundabouts* was among the first to raise the question of the effect of a more competitive education and training market on access and equity.

Barnett reviewed an extensive range of literature and analysed the participation of women in TAFE and concluded that in order to achieve equity of outcomes a number of barriers need to be overcome. Tendering for vocational education would need to provide specifically for: flexible timetabling; targets for gender balance; counselling and support services; appropriate publicity and promotion; location constraints; and appropriate learning environment. Targeted programs such as the Victorian Negotiated Targets Strategy (see below), flexible delivery, the recognition of prior learning and credit transfer were highlighted as reforms which will promote access and equity for women.

Barnett and Wilson (1994) reported four case studies of ACE providers and their responses to the challenges of the training reform agenda. This study highlighted the growing demand for skill-based programs in response to changing economic and employment conditions. It noted the significant level of demand for certification of courses which were serving a vocational purpose for the participants. The study highlighted the links of the ACE providers to TAFE colleges and the development of learning pathways between training providers and across education sectors. The students interviewed for the case studies were not apparently interested in pursuing these pathways. Barnett found that the relationship between these community providers and TAFE was one defined by co-operation, while their relationship with private training providers was essentially competitive. This is given another aspect by Barnett's other research on equity which showed that community providers regarded equity issues as important, whereas commercial providers thought this was more a responsibility of publicly funded providers.

Among the most significant recent documents relevant to the pathways from ACE to VET for women is *Think Local and Compete*, a review of the role of ACE in the national VET system, carried out for ANTA by Schofield Associates (Schofield, 1996).

This report is significant for its comprehensive review of recent policy and research regarding ACE's vocational role as understood in terms of the ANTA Agreement. The report contains a useful discussion of the meaning of 'ACE' in order to examine its role in the national system.

- The report limits its focus to what it refers to as the 'generic' role which ACE organisations perform in the national system ie the delivery of accredited VET programs in the same way as any other provider. The review notes two important contributions to equity of the 'generic role' of ACE:

- where ACE organisations deliver VET programs to groups identified as disadvantaged, and in particular, those without adequate language and/or literacy skills and those in rural and remote communities

- by the fact that ACE organisations are delivering VET, they are 'opening new pathways' for individuals to progress through the national VET system and between it and other sectors. (1996, 18).

Otherwise, the report makes surprisingly few specific references to pathways for women, or to women from target equity groups using pathways from non-credit to accredited VET courses. The report gives quite a full discussion of the role of ACE in regard to the first outcome under the heading of 'providing learning opportunities for individuals and groups' (eg Appendix 4). The report states -

> From our analysis we conclude that ACE providers have a longstanding and proven capacity to deliver to many different groups of women. We are convinced that the content, learning style and orientation embedded in much ACE provision generally strikes a chord with large numbers of women, accounting in part for the demand from them for programs delivered by ACE providers. ACE providers have demonstrated their capacity to respond to the scheduling needs of women with family responsibilities and to provide learning opportunities in an environment that women find supportive and conducive to learning. (p.25)

A concern is expressed about the lower participation rate of women in accredited VET courses *offered in ACE*. This is elaborated in the supporting appendix. However, there is no focus on the specific and intersecting needs of women created by rural location, Aboriginality, disability and low literacy. It is certainly implied that the attractiveness of ACE to women is a factor bringing such groups into accredited VET within ACE but this is not examined.

The report gives much more emphasis to the finding that *the capacity* of ACE to meet the needs of 'individuals and groups' identified as disadvantaged is highly dependent on public funding precisely because ACE is a largely a user-pays system within an increasingly de-regulated 'training market'. Equity in ACE provision is severely limited by the constraints of cost-recovery and competition for adult learners with a capacity to pay. This is consistent with the findings of the recent NSW study of the economics of ACE provision which documents the inequity effects of user-pays combined with non-targeted funding support for providers.(McIntyre, Brown and Ferrier, 1997).

Hence the importance of the other dimension of ACE's contribution to the national VET system which the Schofield review calls its 'value-adding' role (Schofield, 1996, 30). In essence, this refers to the claim that ACE brings 'something different' to the delivery of VET courses within the national system. Schofield outlines four ways in which ACE performs a value-adding role:

- ACE has a 'training market value' by contributing to the diversity of provision through its distinctive ethos of community-based and community control; yet this value has to be recognised and protected in policy and practice
- ACE has a 'locality value' because it is responsive to local and regional labour markets as a source of demand; ACE can respond to demand in localities serviced by neither public nor private providers
- ACE has a 'community value' by making a significant contribution to community development, including the ability to integrate with other agencies and identify and meet the demand for relevant VET
- ACE has an 'organisational value' in that it has an educational culture of learner-centredness and lifelong learning 'which need to be more deeply embedded in the national VET system' (1996, 33).

These aspects, in Schofield's view, are being over-looked in the emphasis on ACE's role in providing funded VET activity. Nevertheless, it is not clear how the 'value-adding' strengths of ACE translate into pathways from ACE to VET courses for women identified as disadvantaged. In the detail of the report and the supporting appendices there are no references to this matter or to the National VET Strategy for Women.

2.7 Pathways, equity and competition

ANTA's recent emphasis on the 'value-adding' properties of ACE is central to current discussion about ACE -VET pathways and in particular how the pathways contribute to the equity objectives of VET policies, including the National Women's Strategy. This is especially so in a policy context which is moving to develop the 'training market' (ANTA, 1996).

The Pathways Issues Paper concluded that:

> The open training market may prove a mixed blessing for the ACE sector and incentives to encourage collaboration and co-operation will be required so that competition for the VET dollar does not undermine or destroy local and regional arrangements. Monitoring of the effectiveness of such incentives should be incorporated into funding agreements (Sharpe and Robertson, 1996, 31).

Current thinking about competition policy in education and training will determine how much ACE can contribute by way of 'value-adding' to a more diverse and competitive system of VET. The nature of the mechanisms employed to increase competition will encourage or discourage the role of ACE. In particular, they will impact on the role of ACE in achieving equity objectives through the pathways from ACE to VET.

However, competition 'mechanisms' as presently discussed will be of little benefit to the development of ACE in states where ACE is not yet recognised as an integral part of the system but remains in a marginal role.

There are limitations in the current framing of equity policy on the one hand and competition policy on the other, which combine to limit understanding of the capacity of VET systems to meet the needs of disadvantaged individuals and groups. In summary:

- 'Equity' is addressed in terms of the 'representation' of 'target equity groups' in the system and the strategies needed to increase their participation. While such a system perspective is necessary, it ignores the compound nature of disadvantage where the membership of equity 'groups' overlaps (see Golding and Volkoff, 1997)
- Further, disadvantage is unevenly distributed over localities and regions. The needs of disadvantaged individuals and groups are specific, highly differentiated and localised. Unless this is acknowledged there is a potential failure of equity policy even before competition policy acts to create inequity through 'market failure'.
- Because disadvantage is compound, localised and unevenly distributed, the burden of achieving 'equity outcomes' bears very differently upon providers in different locations within VET systems and providers are not necessarily resourced appropriately to meet these outcomes.

An effective equity strategy in VET has to address the difficulties of identifying individuals (given inadequate definitions of equity groups) and make sensitive provisions to localised needs. One initiative that has been singled out for possible national adoption is the Victorian 'Negotiated Targets Strategy' (Lundberg and Cleary, 1995).

In a more competitive system, the ANTA Issues Paper, *Developing the Training Market of the Future* (ANTA, 1996) suggests that equity is one area where 'the market' may fail to meet social justice objectives, requiring government to then act as a 'purchaser' of

training. The Victorian Targets Strategy is one example of such practice. Providers negotiate targets for the participation of equity groups for a given year. Though the system has difficulties (such as the 'resistance' of providers to set any but token targets for Aboriginal people, the problems in defining 'membership' of particular target groups and the lack of good data to evaluate the success of the strategy) it appears to be effective in orienting providers to equity objectives, identifying local needs and providing appropriately for different groups.

The purchase of 'equity places' (ie the 'purchase' of programs and student contact hours) is a feature of ACE provision in Victoria as part of the state's Managing Diversity Policy. This is consistent with the new era of funding regimes which emphasise funding agreements. There are good reasons why such an approach is needed if ACE is to maximise its role in developing pathways for disadvantaged women. Chief among these is the effect on user-pays of *narrowing* participation to more advantaged people.

Thus, it might be argued that because ACE is community-based, it is responsive to local need and demand, and since it has a supportive learner-centred culture, it is well-placed to achieve equity objectives by addressing the specific and localised needs of particular groups falling within equity targets. However, the *capacity* of ACE organisations to achieve equity outcomes is highly dependent on appropriate funding regimes. There is strong evidence that the economics of a user-pays system *combined with* non-targeted funding regimes limit this capacity (McIntyre, Brown and Ferrier, 1997).

It is the general adult education courses which are perceived to be 'non-formal' and which are 'non-credit' which are expected to lead women to enter more formal and accredited VET courses. But the dynamics of user-pays tends to narrow participation. In the absence of marginal (or base) funding regimes which require equity outputs, ACE organisations maximise their returns by marketing courses to clienteles who demand them and who can afford them. These clienteles are relatively advantaged in terms of qualifications, employment and income. In poorer and less populous localities, ACE organisations can barely recover costs and consequently may seek alternative sources of funding through competitive tendering, which tends to be more targeted. For ACE to maximise its 'equity outputs', funding regimes need to target participation of those who cannot otherwise participate and foster the development of appropriate services (McIntyre, Brown and Ferrier, 1997). Funding regimes must build in the additional costs required to provide quality services to disadvantaged groups (Barnett, 1993).

The conclusion is that ACE's capacity to achieve equity outputs might well be enhanced in a national system which (a) moved to purchase equity outcomes and (b) encouraged local organisations to act as intermediaries to broker demand - where demand is known to exist through the community network but might not be expressed directly to the public sector organisations.

The review by Schofield underlines that ACE is already well-positioned to operate in a more competitive system due to its 'market-driven' nature and responsiveness. But this is clearly no guarantee that ACE can play a role in equity. However, national competition policy in VET, as expressed in the ANTA Issues Paper on competition policy, shows insufficient understanding of local and regional differentiation of need and demand for VET and the role community-based organisations play in meeting the specific needs of 'equity groups'.

In principle, the emerging framework for competitive VET should accommodate strategies for ensuring equity of access and outcome. Equity can be considered a source of latent demand to be met by appropriate, differentiated, localised supply. Equity targets can be met competitively at the local level as an integral part of VET provision. The role of intermediaries could be broadened to include community organisations to identify the specific needs of people from equity backgrounds and broker and/or provide VET services. Without such a view, it is difficult to see an expanded role for community-based adult education, particularly since these organisations currently already meet equity needs albeit in an under-resourced way.

This has implications for national policy and practice. Against the background of falling participation by women in VET, ACFE points out that in 1994 Victoria was the only state in which this did not occur. It is thought that the major factor in this trend was the 'relative strength of the ACFE system in Victoria to generate pathways into vocational education and training...' (ACFEB, 1996,6). Victoria has a large and highly developed network of ACE providers across the state. Where ACE is not well developed in this way, it may not even be possible to speak of ACE organisations 'competing' for public funding to deliver equity. Hence the recommendation of the South Australian study for the formal recognition and resourcing of ACE networks in all states and territories.

An important conclusion of this analysis, therefore, is that the future capacity for ACE to develop pathways from 'general adult education' to VET courses will be directly determined by the kind of strategies adopted at both national and state levels to enhance competitiveness in VET provision. Competition policy may help to widen participation rather than narrow it if these strategies favour purchasing of equity outputs and give encouragement for ACE organisations to compete for the funds and recognition of their role as local 'intermediaries' in brokering demand.

3. Models of pathway planning

The interviews revealed a rich array of pathway planning models. Yet each 'model' has many features, some of which are shared with others, so that 'good practice' in planning pathways is actually a composite of many good practices. Particular strategies or services may be blended to achieve a pathway for a group of women. Providers convey a strong impression that pathway development needs to be thought of as an holistic and multi-faceted process - while there are many aspects to consider, the whole picture should be kept in view.

Pathway planning is deeply embedded in the organisational culture of many of the community providers who contributed their experiences to the research. For disadvantaged women especially, paths are planned by a weaving together of different strands of community practice. Advice and counselling, emotional support, child care, employment services, networking with other agencies and specific arrangements with VET providers are among the elements which may be brought together in creating each individual's pathway.

The development of pathway planning models is uneven across the different states and territories. Victoria is best represented in this section because it has developed a strong network of community providers with well-established models set up to bridge women's courses into formal VET provision. One of the key outcomes of the research is that *well-developed* community-based provision can play a central role in developing women's pathways to VET. Where this ethos and practice are not well-developed, there are few pathways and fewer models of good practice.

This section documents a range of models which are abstractions from richly complex sets of arrangements and these are reported in a fairly full way to highlight the holistic nature of pathway development. The models are named and classified to demonstrate different aspects of the analysis of pathway development. In turn, the models point to some key principles for developing pathways and these are described in the concluding section of this report.

For each model, one or more case studies is described and a wide range of examples can also be found in the Pathway Planning Handbook. The description includes:

- Entry point models
- The CGEA (Certificates in General Education for Adults) as a pathway model
- Path to employment models
- Integrated models

- Provider partnerships
- Community development models
- Volunteer worker to VET training
- Culturally appropriate pathways
- Statewide strategies
- Open learning as a pathway strategy

3.1 Entry point models

Many pathway arrangements could be described as entry or 'starting point' models. ACE providers frequently observe that courses can be a bridge to further learning, the first step in the pathway. However, their thinking about pathways may not go much beyond this.

There are many variations of this model. The most common variation is an informal non-credit course organised as a means of reintroducing women to learning through a positive experience in a supportive environment. The course may be deliberately linked by the provider to follow-on options in community centres and other VET providers.

Increased confidence in ability to learn can be an outcome of any course. The model is widespread, though it appears that a good many ACE providers across the country have not developed their pathway strategies much beyond it.

Sometimes the starting point is carefully designed for a target group and is intended to have certain educational outcomes. Since many disadvantaged women have low levels of English language and literacy, adult literacy is often a key starting point. The Certificates in General Education for Adults has probably been the single most important pathway for such women. It figures very often as a component of pathways, particularly in Victorian Neighbourhood Houses, where it leads on to vocational training or is combined with it through a general curriculum option (see the CGEA as a pathway model). Several examples highlight courses.

Milligan House is a neighbourhood house in Bunbury, a provincial town in the south west of WA. Women make up a large proportion of the participants in Milligan House programs and most of the women who seek educational opportunities at Milligan House are comfortable in the Centre's informal environment. Some doubt their capacity to succeed in the more formal surroundings of higher education.

Student pathways at Milligan House are less part of a formal package than they are programs developed to meet the needs that students present at a particular time. The House believes that what it can do best is create an environment for participants in which they are encouraged to recognise their own skills and worth both through courses and through developing experience and skills through paid and unpaid work at the centre.

The Milligan House example is interesting because it illustrates that even a small provider can develop a number of clearly defined 'options' which act as starting points for women's pathways. The House currently has at least three successful models - a Mature Age Study Program, an Adult Literacy Scheme and a Self Help Writers' Group.

The Mature Age Study Program is a curriculum developed by Learning Centre Link, the state wide association of neighbourhood learning centres and neighbourhood houses in WA.

Six women who joined a craft class at Milligan House soon indicated that they were interested in further education opportunities if they could find what they wanted to do and could feel confident enough to begin. Milligan House decided to conduct the Mature Age Study Program at a time which suited these women.

The six week course included gathering information, listening to speakers, visiting education providers and discussing options. The women were comfortable exploring their options on "home ground" and with the flexibility of a course which allowed them to exit at any time without loss of face.

Since participating in the course, a number of the participants have gone on to courses both at the local TAFE College and at the local campus of the Edith Cowan University including two who have recently graduated as primary school teachers. Some women have sought extra support since going to other institutions and have participated in sessions of later Mature Age Study Programs. Some seek personal tutorials at Milligan House.

The Adult Literacy Program is co-ordinated by Milligan House. The volunteer tutors provide a one to one literacy program for people who are unwilling or unable to go into the TAFE or school system. A significant number of the students are women who have intellectual disabilities or are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

A key challenge for pathway development from ACE to VET is to ensure that appropriate models are developed for disadvantaged women living in socio-economically depressed areas. One challenge for community providers is to build trust with participants in order to inspire their interest in education and confidence in themselves as learners. This is an essential part of the environment for sharing skills and moving on to other options.

Junction Community Centre serves Rosewater East (Adelaide), one of the most disadvantaged areas in Australia, with high concentrations of Aboriginal people, people of non-English speaking background, early school leavers, people living in poverty and unemployed people. The Centre receives core funding from the SA Department of Family and Community Services with a very small amount from ACE.

Women using the Centre need ongoing and often intensive education provision if they are to make up so much lost ground educationally, socially, emotionally and financially. It takes a long time to prepare people at this level of disadvantage for further education. Bringing them to a point of deciding that education is what they want is a crucial step before they can consider moving into VET programs. Few are comfortable in secondary schools with continuing students, the only Year 11/12 option available in the area. There are so many other pressing demands in their lives that education can seem a luxury. The centre has a definite philosophy:

> The philosophy of the Junction Community Centre is that every single person has a skill or attribute that can be shared. All staff work from this belief base in each of the 38 programs and with each of the 700 people who come to the centre each week. Developing even an adequate adult learning program is extraordinarily difficult given the lack of available ACE funding and the low starting skill-level of the community.
>
> The first step in the pathway toward education and training is the establishment of trust and this is often established by encouraging mothers to bring their children to playgroup. The women may join a program such as cooking on a budget, nutrition,

parenting, making decisions, and often, after some years, some may be interested and ready to enrol in courses such as a communications group, return to study, computer skills, Life Experience Counts or resume writing.

All pathways begin from the premise that every person has a skill or attribute that can be shared. The Centre gathers groups together to establish their expectations of a course that will be designed to meet their aspirations. Participants are encouraged and assisted to set goals realisable in 8 two hourly sessions which, due to scarcity of resources, is the maximum time that a course can be run. They are assured of confidentiality and they are always telephoned to see why they missed a class. The Family Support Worker and other staff notice and assist participants before problems develop. Groups are kept small, because of the high level of individual need.

When a new course is starting, the Centre tracks women from previous courses to invite them to participate. In this close and trusting environment, people just don't drop out. The Junction Community Centre does not wait for people to come but goes out and brings them to the centre. Each person is personally informed of any activity that may be of interest to them and given encouragement to participate.

This example illustrates that pathways for disadvantaged women are limited not only through lack of government funded resources but also through lack of flexibility on the part of formal institutions, which are perceived by the women to be 'threatening and rigid'. The small ACE budget alone is too limited to bring about real opportunities for women, and it appears that such community providers are being excluded from access to VET funding.

Entry point courses to help women move back to learning are often informal, emphasising confidence building rather than structured 'content'. However sometimes a course highlighting particular content can be the springboard for other activities, especially where the course gives access to 'really useful knowledge' (Thompson, 1983) of some kind for a group of women. The course can provide a 'transformative' experience, enabling changes in life directions. An example of this was the 'Rural Women and the Law' course run by Simpson and District Community House in Victoria. The course exemplified the maxim that 'knowledge is power'.

The Rural Women's Outreach Project is one of four such projects funded in rural Victoria to give rural women access to relevant legal information. When the Outreach Worker came to Simpson to book a space, the Coordinator of Simpson suggested that they join forces to develop a course. The outcome was 'Rural Women and the Law'.

The course included law for women, contracts, workers compensation and so on, and was an outstanding success. The Simpson Coordinator enrolled in the course and said that transformations in the women unfolded before her eyes. She had never seen such clear evidence of the truth of the slogan, 'Knowledge is power', since most women have now moved into other education and training programs, a breakthrough especially for some of the women who had been very isolated and had resisted community involvement.

In a similar way, small business training for women was described by some providers as empowering and leading directly to further action in community projects. These include, for example, the courses run by Outreach Community Centre (described under the 'community development' model)

3.2 The CGEA as an entry point model

Half a dozen interviews showed that in states where it is offered by ACE, the Certificates in General Education for Adults can be an important entry point for women with low literacy and numeracy levels.

This model is selected as a 'model' because adult literacy has been a key element in ACE organisations expanding their services to disadvantaged women. It highlights the important role which voluntary tutor schemes have come to play in neighbourhood houses, as a component of pathway planning. With the expansion of labour market programs in the 1990s, the role of ACE providers also expanded and the Special Intervention Program (SIP) made better resources available to ACE organisations for this kind of work. An extension of this activity is the integration of literacy, labour market training and VET options (explained below under the 'Integrated model').

It is significant that pathways are thought of as combining literacy and numeracy needs with other options including vocational education and training. The approach of the Ballarat East Community House in Victoria illustrates this development of the CGEA as a starting point linked to SIP and other options.

> The House program operates on the basis of 'supported challenge'. Community House and Adult Literacy and Basic Education staff focus on assisting people to move on by suggesting options to women who might be suited or interested. There is a culture of 'give it a go, if you stuff up, you can come back.' The courses have been developed to meet the needs of younger women lacking formal education, three-quarters of whom are unemployed or on a pension.
>
> To this end, there is a focus on building initial pathways within the House. A major pathway is through the CGEA. From participation in any of a range of very short programs, women are encouraged to enrol in 4 or 5 courses which together total 12-14 hours per week. These include literacy, maths, life skills and computing. Some of the students are SIP participants who enrol in other courses to extend their training.
>
> Some are recruited from among volunteers and other course participants, leading to a high level of commitment. Many participants have proceeded to LEAP programs, Jobclub or the Ballarat Regional Adult Education Centre. The House has won a VET tender to enable it ~~to~~ offer the Certificate in Information Technology in 1997, opening another pathway.
>
> Employment opportunities are scarce in Ballarat so, often after completion of a course with another provider, women return to the Community House because of the opportunities it provides for support and interaction.

Ballarat is a small provider compared to the other very large and flourishing ACE provider (BRACE) and the TAFE college in the area. However, 'small is beautiful', since it is exactly the 'intimacy' of the House which makes it effective. A disadvantage is that the organisation is not rich and the costs of curriculum materials from TAFE are heavy and difficult to cover.

The Continuing Education Centre, Albury-Wodonga, a much larger provider with a heavy involvement in labour market programs, has developed the principle of 'integrating' the CGEA and the General Curriculum Option of the CGEA was used to offer vocational training options.

> The Centre's staff realised that young women coming through LEAP programs needed a specially tailored program to attract them to continue learning. There were women who are unemployed, early school leavers or of non-English speaking or

Koorie backgrounds. Many of the women are referred by agencies including employment case managers, psychological services, the Department of Juvenile Justice and youth support services.

For many of these women, lack of literacy and numeracy skills are a formidable barrier to further education, training and work. CEC staff realised the potential of integrating the CGEA and other VET modules especially at the lower certificate levels, a move which was not of interest to the TAFE institutes in the region.

By delivering all streams of the CGEA they could marry literacy and numeracy with vocational competencies to develop pathway options that would lead young women towards their goals.

Young women interviewed on leaving the LEAP program were clear that they wanted training opportunities in the areas of child care and office skills. In both the child care and office administration streams, students can focus on basic skills and vocational competencies in a mix to suit individual needs.

By completing competencies in the Certificate 2 in Office Administration or the Certificate 2 in Home Based Child Care they can proceed to TAFE often receiving credit through RPL or exemptions with some of the competencies of higher level certificates. Integral to the program is work experience. In the Child Care area, the CEC has worked closely with the Mobile Child Care Service, which they coordinate in the region, to develop both the curriculum and experience, ensuring that the training at the CEC is relevant and practical. In addition a bridging course in child care is available in which a teacher trained in both child care and literacy prepares students for TAFE.

Another example of the CGEA as starting point is Moreland Adult Education Association (MAE), which has developed a path from the CGEA into the Child Care Certificate for women of non-English speaking background (many of whom are fluent English speakers but need ESL support to successfully enter and complete vocational education courses). Moreland is an area of high unemployment, and this model could fit equally well in the next section because it targets local employment. In this centre, the advising and counselling work and the supportive environment are key factors.

The main pathway is from CGEA Level 2 into the Child Care Certificate 3, a pathway that was deliberately developed because child care is one of the few areas of employment available in the City of Moreland, mainly due to the requirement of the Children's Services Regulations which now require child care centres to employ qualified staff. MAE is registered as a Training Provider by the State Training Board in Victoria.

A large proportion of the women who come to MAE are initially enrolled in adult literacy classes. Placement in the appropriate level of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) is determined at an initial interview (assessment), an integral part of formalised adult literacy provision.

At this initial interview, in the process of assessing the student's language and literacy needs, the MAE Coordinator (a trained assessor) and the student discuss the student's learning pathway options. Options are available both within MAE and by proceeding to another provider eg TAFE. A pathway options diagram is on display at the centre. From this a potential, individual learning pathway is mapped for each student. The Coordinator is available for ongoing counselling as and when students are ready.

MAE has incorporated an Introduction to Child Care module into the CGEA as a general curriculum option for which it has developed its own curriculum. MAE has an arrangement with an employment agency in the area which places child care

workers. There is plenty of casual work available and this has lead some women into full time work.

An important feature is the way this path is supported by and related to other components. The centre also conducts a Volunteer Training Program in which women are trained to support people with special needs on a one to one basis, giving language support for culturally and linguistically diverse students, working as aides for women with disabilities. Career preparation such as preparing for the Police Force entry examination is another activity. The Centre also won funding under the SIP labour market programs to assist women's pathways.

A theme of discussion so far has been the reported reluctance of TAFE to facilitate pathway arrangements, even when approached by small providers to do so. This provider was another small centre which reported such difficulties. In one instance, the MAE had prepared students specifically for a VET course which the Institute had promised to run at Moreland campus. This course was not offered as planned. This suggests that larger TAFE colleges may have resourcing practices which work against linkages with small providers who approach TAFE expecting the needs of learners to be given priority.

3.3 Path to employment models

The examples cited above show how the literacy component can be linked to vocational options and to employment seeking. One pathway model is a variation of this, and features targeting local employment for women. This model is followed at Wingate Avenue Community Centre (Victoria) where the great majority of participants are of non-English speaking background and are long term unemployed. The Interview Skills Course is an example of a short, preparatory course designed to develop specific employment-related skills. This new course is designed to develop employment interview skills in conjunction with an established Introduction to Child Care course in a way that is similar to the Moreland model already mentioned.

Both courses were developed in response to the needs of women for whom income is the first priority; higher than further education or training at this stage of their lives. Many migrant women in the area are keen to work in child care because it is an area where they already have some confidence and experience through raising their own families. The Introduction to Child Care course has had a long and very successful history both in terms of specific vocational outcomes and also in terms of opening opportunities for entry to other areas of education and training.

The Interview Skills Course is non-accredited and is promoted through CES and Case Managers to give women a "taste" of child care training before they go into longer, accredited courses. The aims are to keep the course short so that successful completion is maximised, to focus on interview skills and child care skills, and to incorporate RPL or credit transfer (depending on the particular TAFE college). The child care course has received recognition from the Western Melbourne Institute of TAFE as "an excellent preparation for entry into accredited training programs".

Wyong Adult and Community Education Centre, a growing NSW ACE provider, has developed nursing training which illustrates some features of successful 'paths to local employment': the purchase of state-wide accredited curriculum modified to meet local needs; responsiveness to workplace and women's training needs; and collaboration between the ACE provider and local businesses resulting in cooperative delivery.

The Wyong area is relatively poor and has a high number of retired people. The demand for aged care training in the area cannot be met due to insufficient places being planned in the state profile. The provision of the Certificate 3 in Assistant-in-Nursing began as a

response to local nursing home training needs. Wyong bought the only relevant curriculum which was available from a private VET provider and later, BACE funded Wyong to write curriculum for nurses in area health services, a long and difficult task since national competencies had not yet been established and the Nursing College was not very helpful.

> In partnership with a local nursing home, Wyong drafted competencies as the course developed, amending the curriculum once national competencies were established. In 1996, the course was accredited. Despite the length of time between beginning and completing the curriculum development, Wyong was very happy with the process and the assistance given by the NSW VETAB.
>
> Since initial provision of the course in 1994, 60 women per year have completed nursing training at Wyong. Participants range in age from 16-40s plus. They include women working in nursing homes in the local area, early school leavers, some HSC students doing the course concurrently with HSC so that they can find part time work while studying the following year in nursing degrees, women wanting to work in paramedical areas such as the ambulance service and young women HSC graduates who have not gained a place in a tertiary nursing course. A few of the women are Aboriginal or of non-English speaking background.
>
> The course is offered in a range of venues in the workplace but outside of work time. A negotiated timetable takes account of participants' shift times and family responsibilities. Wyong works closely with nursing home educators. The nursing homes support their staff to enrol in the course, give the Wyong trainers full access to their facilities and consider women's training commitments in the scheduling of shifts.
>
> Wyong helps participants to locate child care, literacy needs are addressed and personal crisis counselling is available. The course proceeds in a caring and supportive learner centred environment in which teachers know their students well and are sensitive to their individual needs.
>
> Outcomes for women have been highly positive. Some 22 so far have gone on to train as State Enrolled Nurses, others have enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work (Habilitation) or have found employment in such areas as private nursing or HACC. Of the current group of 13 participants, a few weeks into the course, 4 have already found part time employment with the promise of full time employment on completion of training.

This example illustrates that accredited vocational curricula are important in pathway development and can facilitate provision of VET by community providers. The course is now being offered across rural areas because it gives rural women the opportunity to receive a national qualification without having to leave their local area, it offers the option of part or full time study, gives industry employees an opportunity to upgrade and ensures more competent nursing home staff delivering better patient care.

Similarly, Merinda Park Community Centre focuses on child-care as a source of local employment for women. Merinda Park Community Centre is a neighbourhood house situated in Cranbourne and the majority of its participants are from the surrounding City of Casey, a sprawling, outer suburban municipality with a rapidly expanding population in the south western growth corridor of Melbourne. The Cranbourne population is remarkable for the extremely high percentage of single parent (mostly women) families whose most urgent needs are for work and child care. The Centre's participants include a large minority of women of non-English speaking background and students with intellectual disabilities or other learning difficulties.

There are 37 child care centres in the City of Casey. Qualified staff are in short supply. Merinda Park has set out to meet these needs by offering training opportunities for women to work in child care and other occupations for which work is available in the region.

Merinda Park Community Centre began to focus on assisting women with pathways from ACE to VET in 1994, aiming to provide a range of educational and vocational opportunities that enable women to develop competencies in areas of employment available in the local area. The Centre is a registered provider of both adult, community and further education and of vocational education and training.

In a little over two years, the size of its program and the number of enrolments has increased rapidly. From initially offering the Certificates of General Education for Adults, Merinda Park now offers a range of vocational education and training programs in the fields of Child Care and Information Technology. Some of the certificates in child care offer direct credit transfer into the Associate Diploma of Child Care.

Some of the vocational certificates are offered as stand alone courses and some are integrated with the CGEA. When the CGEA is offered as a stand alone course, the content of the General Curriculum Option is negotiated with participating students which ensures that it is locally relevant and customised to the needs and preferences of the particular group.

Nearly all VET students at Merinda Park have been placed in employment often being offered the position during field placement. Many have gone on to further study. Merinda Park is now offering outreach programs in seven locations including other ACE providers, the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and other venues.

Both Wyong and Merinda Park report that they do not advertise their vocational courses because of the extent of unmet demand. Not enough funding is available to conduct enough classes for the number of women wanting to participate. Training places in, for example, the Associate Diploma of Child Care at the nearest TAFE Institute are so few that Merinda Park has recently applied to extend its scope of registration to include the Associate Diploma of Child Care and now plans to offer the full range of accredited child care courses. The women say, "Why go to TAFE when we so much like learning here?"

Though these programs of specific occupational training allow women to take advantage of local employment opportunities, especially in child care or office skills, they do not help women access 'non-traditional' occupations or challenge the gendered division of labour. However, they are proven starting points for employment and numbers of women are demanding them precisely because of the way they are offered. The success of accredited vocational (ACE VET) courses offered by ACE organisations in NSW and Victoria is partly explained by the demand for accessible VET to be provided in a flexible, convivial and supported way in a community setting (see Schofield, 1996) rather than through less flexible, more remote and less supportive formal institutions.

Whether they are being adequately resourced to provide courses in this way is an important issue emerging from this research. It must be said that the current low level of resourcing of ACE is causing ACE workers to subsidise the real costs of providing community-based VET.

3.4 Integrated models

An integrated model describes a form of pathway development which brings several components together in order to meet the needs of a particular group of women. This occurs

within an ACE organisation which provides a range of options. Pathways are planned and developed largely within the one provider from an 'entry point' to another experience such as an accredited vocational course. The integrated model is therefore an example of the 'within ACE pathway' type.

The integration of components is an important guiding principle for pathway development, as cases such as Merinda Park clearly demonstrate. An integrated model can have features such as:

- They bring together ESL, literacy, numeracy, workplace education and general adult education options for students in order to meet a range of needs and make best use of scarce resources, especially for entry level literacy courses where levels of support are highest and most costly to provide.
- They support pathways by an organisational and learning culture in which students are individually cared for and which is dedicated to the development of confidence and self esteem as well as the acquisition of competencies, where there are strong relationships between teachers and students and teachers working collaboratively across areas.
- They include work experience in the curriculum and seek to adapt content to ensure that training is practical and relevant to the workplace.

The Continuing Education Centre, Albury-Wodonga has developed a number of pathway programs of this kind. Thus it adopts the guiding principle of integrating the CGEA and vocational training options for some students (see above) and for ESL students who often do not readily move out of ESL classes, the Centre has organised learning English through general program activities.

> The language coordinator has developed a program and support system to encourage women of non-English speaking background to extend their learning opportunities through participation in general ACE program activities such as line dancing, pottery and floral art. These contribute to language acquisition, develop other skills and encourage social contact with other women in the community.
>
> Language teachers and teachers of computing team-teach a course which develops language skills through the Certificate in Written and Spoken English (CSWE) and computing skills from the Certificate in Information Technology as well as an understanding of vocational learning frameworks.

Yet another model was workplace training developed in partnership with a large engineering works company to enable women to participate equitably in the new environment brought about through reformed structures and practices in the company.

> This engineering company introduced massive changes simultaneously including quality assurance and a team based structure without realising the profound effect on the workplace culture. Not only did process and clerical workers need new skills; so did management at all levels. This program, a Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) initiative, was originally developed as a partnership between the CEC, Wodonga and a local engineering company to enable women to participate equitably in the new environment. For women the historically male oriented and dominated culture presented extra barriers to full participation in the team-based decision making processes.
>
> 'Facilitating a Process of Change at [ ] Engineering Company' is not a course but a process which is designed for women to develop skills and confidence to express workplace issues as they affect women, be able to negotiate difficult work situations

and respond to affirmative action, actively participate in committees, seek to become team leaders and supervisors and pursue more training opportunities. It aims to provide role models across the teams to the other women in the plant and enable women, committees, team leaders, supervisors and management to value each other's work cooperatively in democratic decision making and facilitate the process of restructuring and change throughout the plant.

Most women are machine operators or assembly line workers. A few are clerical staff. Many work not for a career but for income. They are too weary with two jobs (employment and home) to pursue outside study. Some have difficulty with male bosses or men working alongside them. Of the 256 workers interviewed at the company who had volunteered for the WELL program, 80 were women (23 were women from non-English speaking backgrounds). Of these 60 enrolled and 30 completed the program in 1996. WELL funds will enable 20 more women to complete the program in 1997.

One of the problems pioneering this model of pathway development in ACE is the lack of recognition of the need for such models - the term 'integrated' is not widely recognised outside of the ACE sector, for example, in universities or most government departments. The costs are high, and publicly-funded TAFE is avoiding provision of these more expensive programs.

Morrison House is also an example of an ACE provider with a well-worked out 'integrated' model and has developed a holistic and comprehensive program carefully planned to enhance individual development and successful pathways, especially for women. It sees its core work as developmental. The model is founded on adult literacy and basic education which was first offered at Morrison House 10 years ago.

From the beginning, participants were encouraged to become involved in other House activities and learning programs. The development and accreditation of the Certificates of General Education for Adults, together with increased funds available for community based delivery of adult literacy, was soon followed by access by community providers to Commonwealth Growth Funds, eligibility to tender for Labour Market Programs such as SIP, eligibility to register and tender for funds as a Private Provider of VET and, most recently, access to DEETYA funds for Prevocational Training. This has enabled Morrison House to diversity its provision at very low cost to participants.

At least 100 women participate in adult literacy and basic education classes at Morrison House each year. The age range from 15-70 includes many women of non-English speaking background who tend to be aged 35+. In the last 18 months, increased numbers of participants have been in the 15-25 age range.

The assessment interview for placement in an adult literacy course is "a vital hour" that sets the scene for the future for most women. In the course of establishing literacy levels the interview encourages discussion of what's happened before in the women's learning experience and present options. For the woman "It's your choice." The options and the choice are reiterated frequently.

From the Morrison House perspective, the "guts" is lost in institutions that can only map courses. The environment is what counts towards successful outcomes. And not only the internal environment which often has to counterbalance the crises that women have to meet in the lives of their family and the high responsibility for sorting through problems with children, in-laws and family breakdowns.

The holistic approach is made evident by the carefully planned complement of courses in which women can proceed at their own pace from literacy to accredited training or to the Victorian Certificate of Education, to TAFE or DEETYA training or

university or work. The approach is also evident in the way that courses are integrated into the management and operations of the House. The Morrison House Child Care Centre provides the tutors for the Certificate in Children's Services, observation opportunities for women in training and student placements and work experience in the care of children from 0-16 through the preschool and out-of-school-hours services which operate on the premises.

Morrison House, through its provision of Home and Community Care (HACC) and computer courses for Shire employees has seen the response when the world of education is opened up and work is improved as confidence levels rise.

3.5 Provider partnership models

So far, most of the models described refer to 'within-ACE pathways' and it is significant that this family of models should be so well-developed, reflecting the success of established ACE providers in continuously developing the range of options they offer participants.

A second family of models refers to pathways from ACE to an accredited course in TAFE, or in some cases a university, or a private provider. A different set of parameters comes into play, bringing a different set of problems and issues. A key issue is how far the linkage between *courses* reflects a positive working relationship between *organisations*. The advantage of a working partnership is that it allows a range of options to be developed for women.

There a number of variations of partnership models:

- A small ACE provider may act as an *outpost or a feeder* for a larger VET provider such as a TAFE college, providing an 'outreach' of VET courses to a small community
- There can be a *partnership of equals*, which does not depend upon the providers being of similar sizes, but on establishing effective working relationships which lead to benefits for each organisation
- In some states *inter-agency collaboration* has developed as a way of working for some community centres in disadvantaged areas which are not primarily funded as ACE providers but which play a key role in creating pathways.

The 'partnership' model can be found in a simple form where the small ACE provider agrees to act as a feeder for accredited courses in the larger regional TAFE institute (or other VET provider, including a larger ACE organisation). This model can be restrictive if it assumes that learners must move out of their community to access courses in a distant institute and if the larger provider does not recognise the efforts of the smaller.

The partnerships can be well established and based on mutual regard and a sharing of resources to mutual benefit. Colac Adult Community Education (a large provider in southern Victoria) and the Gordon Institute of TAFE have developed a formal partnership which is described as 'strong and mutually supportive'. The partnership has enabled Colac to further extend its range of courses and to expand the centre.

A small ACE provider may act as an outpost for a larger VET provider such as a TAFE college. The research found a number of impressive examples of TAFE working in partnership in this way to extend opportunities for VET to small,rural communities. However, from the evidence of the interviews, it seems that this is the exception rather

than the rule. In some states the concept is hardly recognised, while in some places in the more populous states of NSW and Victoria, some TAFE institutes appear lukewarm about co-operation. For whatever reason - perhaps the disparity in resourcing and status of the providers and the emerging terms of competition - this has to be regarded as a systemic obstacle to pathway development for women.

Partnerships are crucial for developing pathways for women to VET. Simpson and District Community Centre is a good example of the success of efforts to 'bring TAFE to town', by supporting women to successfully complete TAFE courses in their local area. It has acted as an extended campus of the TAFE institute. Simpson was established as a Neighbourhood House in the 1980s. Participants include a wide variety of women, predominantly farmers, early school leavers, and sole parents, many of whom need employment following divorce or the sale of their farms. In the past formal education and training was only available if women were able and willing to travel to other centres.

> There is strong demand for computer training, since many women in the district keep the accounts for family farms or small businesses. When computer classes were first offered at night at the nearest high school, 45 minutes from Simpson, there was keen interest among Simpson women but the night driving, large class and unsuitable teacher soon resulted in rapid drop out. Women wanted computer training that would support them through their initial uncertainty and which allowed them to start from their current skill level. The Centre provided this using their one computer and began by providing one to one training. This training, now funded by ACFEB, is aimed at developing confidence and basic computer literacy.
>
> More advanced courses are now provided by arrangement with the nearest TAFE College. Initially, attempts to persuade them to provide programs at Simpson were resisted, until a tutor with experience in outreach programs in another TAFE college was employed. That tutor is now Head of Department and the offerings have diversified into other VET programs, some in conjunction with the TAFE institute hundreds of kilometers distant from Simpson which was the tutor's original location.
>
> Training is delivered in small groups of 6-9 students working with a tutor from the TAFE institute. For each four week course (fifteen courses have been run so far) each woman is issued with a laptop. They attend one class per week at the centre and take the computer home with them to work through the course at their own pace. They are able to contact the tutor by modem if they want assistance but more often take their laptop to a fellow student's home where they work together.
>
> The same system is used for more advanced learners and user pays courses which are being offered in Quicken accounting software at both beginners and advanced levels. Other accredited courses are offered in Business and Information Technology. Women enrol at the TAFE institute but do not attend the main campus. Simpson runs the courses by fleximode using on-campus learning materials and liaising with the institute with whom it collaborates in a problem solving approach to student needs. A tutor from the institute comes to the centre every 2-4 weeks. This enables women to manage their learning to fit around farming activities such as calving and hay making.

Several women have completed modules and found employment and two have graduated with an Associate Diploma in Accounting and an Advanced Certificate in Accounting. In order to provide more advanced VET training, during term breaks the TAFE computer laboratory has been set up at Simpson to provide the practical work component and assessment for the Certificate in Microcomputing.

Simpson also has a partnership with the Eastern Institute of TAFE, a metropolitan provider on the opposite side of Melbourne, to offer a registered nanny course. Eastern Institute sends a tutor to Simpson every 5th Saturday to teach the practical components of the course. The students bring any study problems to the centre coordinator but this becomes very rare as their confidence grows.

The interviews found several other examples of 'outpost' or outreach provision. These were:

- A program at Maryborough Learning Centre (Victoria). The Women Returning to Study Course draws considerably on an RPL package to develop confidence. It takes women on visits to TAFE and universities in the region and gives them some information so that they can document their experiences.
- An outreach program through community adult education at Mansfield Adult Community Education (MACE, north-east Victoria) where women wanting to do something with their future, increase their options and develop confidence and self esteem work with a qualified psychologist as part of MACE's access program.
- The development of a New Opportunities for Aboriginal women course at Koondoola Neighbourhood Centre WA (described later).
- Buchan Resource Centre has developed as a hub of community activities in an isolated part of east Gippsland. It operates a Neighbourhood Centre and is a telecentre and a member of the East Gippsland telenetwork which enables the sharing of information and resources among small and remote ACE centres and larger providers in the provincial towns. Women can undertake courses by distance education through the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE with support from the TAFE Outreach Coordinator.
- Similarly, the Heyfield Community Resource Centre (East Gippsland, Victoria) combines neighbourhood house activities, ACE courses supported by the regional council of ACFE, and VET courses provided as an outreach program of the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, which also operates the DEETYA Key Employment Services Program. The centre is a member of the East Gippsland Telenetwork.

As some of these examples illustrate, *inter-agency collaboration* is a strategy for community centres in disadvantaged areas which are not primarily funded as 'ACE providers' but which have a key role in creating pathways to education and training.

Davoran Park residents are among the most disadvantaged in Adelaide, like those served by The Junction Community Centre (see earlier example). There are very large numbers of people living in poverty who suffer social isolation, domestic violence, unemployment and lack of education. Many are from non-English speaking or Aboriginal background. The centre works out of a holistic, person centred view of learning which makes it essential to offer a diverse and balanced program to meet the variety of individual needs.

Collaborating with other organisations in the community is a key principle for achieving this program, leading to mutual assistance and joint projects to meet specific community needs. Davoran Park works closely with the Family Resource Centre, TAFE, the CES, Skillshare and the local adult re-entry college.

> To assist people develop literacy skills, Davoran Park formed a tripartite agreement with Para TAFE Institute and Para Worklinks (the local Skillshare) which tendered successfully to deliver adult literacy across the northern region of

Adelaide. Pathways for women are offered first through the development of life skills, literacy skills and confidence and, when women are ready, they move to accredited prevocational training.

Voluntary adult literacy tutors are trained with special emphasis on working with people with the least literacy skills. Voluntary tutors then work on a one to one basis with students until they are ready for the next step which is to accompany their tutor to a meeting at TAFE with another student and their tutor. With sufficient skills developed, the student then moves into the Prevocational Certificate training at Para TAFE.

Both Para TAFE Institute and Para Senior College offer carefully designed programs in a friendly environment and with plenty of personal support for students. Women are keen to enrol in their programs once they are confident of themselves as learners and of their basic skills.

The Project involves sharing funds between each member of the consortium so that, unlike many "partnership" arrangements, the smaller provider is not exploited by the larger. The coordinator's position at Davoran Park is funded by the Department of Family and Children's Services. The other twelve members of the team are paid from submission based funds. Most staff are employed part time. Davoran Park chooses to explore other funding options for service delivery if possible, because the amounts available through ACE funding are not commensurate with the effort needed to attract or account for them. The centre has an excellent relationship with local government.

South Gippsland ACE has a similar collaborative approach of 'brokering educational options' for the community. The focus is on advice, referral and support for students as well as a carefully planned flexible program that will assist students into courses at other local education providers. It has a policy of providing short practical courses to get them under way, often towards further education or vocational training. It offers very little formal vocational training concentrating instead on developing very close working relationships with other local providers (neighbourhood houses, TAFE college, secondary colleges, Monash University).

In this way South Gippsland believes it can maintain flexibility to respond quickly and appropriately to the needs of the people in the community when those needs change in response to economic and government policy fluctuations.
The focus is the broad community and for that reason it provides many little courses for small groups which are subsidised by those courses which return profits.

An example from NSW illustrates the difficulty of people in isolated communities accessing VET of any kind. Gravesend is a remote township in western NSW with a population which has fallen from 200 to 150 people during the recent drought. As each farm is sold, rural poverty grows together with a feeling of malaise and apathy as people grieve for the loss of their community and livelihood. 1996-97 has been a good season and there is some small hope for an upturn. Gravesend Adult Learning offers a broad range of courses, combining user pays and funding acquired from submissions to programs such as the Rural Assistance Authority.

Most residents cannot access TAFE campuses which are at least 100 km distant and TAFE has not established an outreach presence in any of these small communities. A computer course devised by Gravesend in partnership with the central school in the isolated township of Collarenebri and funded by the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education has offered the first opportunity for women to access accredited training.

"Confusing Computers" attracted 26 enrolments, 22 of whom are women from farming, retail and service industry backgrounds. Of these, 16 adults (12 women and 4 men) aged from their thirties to their fifties, enrolled in the HSC subject Computing Applications which is delivered over two evenings per week. One woman travels a 166 kilometre round trip on dirt roads each night, except when the road gets washed out. One member of the Confusing Computers Course has enrolled in Year 11 as a full time student and one younger student has joined the adult evening class. The teacher says that this is has been very valuable for all adults and continuing students in each course.

Delivery of Computing Applications is funded by the Collarenebri Central School in the form of time off in lieu for the computer teacher. The extra enrolments have benefited the school in that the staffing formula of Department of School Education in NSW allows schools extra teaching hours for adult enrolments. This has helped combat the problem of a reduction in overall funding to the Central school.

Everybody has benefited from these computing classes; the school, the continuing students, the Gravesend Adult Learning Association, the farms and businesses of the Collarenebri community and the students themselves.

While not, strictly speaking, vocational education and training, the provision of this course has filled a vacuum and presented a first step on the VET pathway which was not previously open.

Finally, an example of an innovative partnership between ACE and TAFE is the adult literacy project at Byron Place Community Centre, a service of Adelaide Central Mission where the majority of program participants are people who have suffered from abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, intellectual disability, alcohol and drug problems, homelessness and institutionalisation and who have very low levels of life skills, education and self esteem.

Byron Place Community Centre and a local TAFE Institute together developed a literacy and numeracy program designed to meet the needs of very disadvantaged people in the Adelaide community.

Since 1994, Byron Place has offered a holistic approach to the learning of literacy, numeracy and basic life skills in an environment which operates on a Rogerian learner centred model. The model is founded on the principles of unconditional positive regard and self paced, student centred learning to develop self worth, self directedness through learning to make choices and interpersonal validation.

In practice this means an initial assessment interview, a very important process for any course, during which the teacher and participant collaborate to develop an individual program which sets realistic goals. Delivery of the program is sufficiently flexible to allow each participant to proceed at their own pace, dropping in and out according to life circumstances, receiving life and career counselling, often informally, as and when required. All participants have their own, individual support worker who often accompanies them to classes to offer on the spot support to cope with past experiences (including very negative schooling experiences) and the emotions that frequently bubble up to the surface during group activities.

In conjunction with literacy and numeracy, participants are assisted with finding housing, tackling addictions and compliance with medication regimes, encouraged to develop positive attitudes and interpersonal and social skills as well as to learn to take responsibility for themselves, their choices and their actions. Staff are committed to being realistic about participants so as not to set them up for failure

and to being available with follow-up support when things go wrong. Staff also accompany students to appointments to provide personal support and debriefing.

Using ACE project funds, TAFE funding of the literacy program salary and support from Adelaide Central Mission, Byron Place Community Centre is writing curriculum and seeking accreditation for a living skills course which is not work based. This is to meet the needs of people who may never be employed but who should not be excluded from education, volunteer work and a satisfying life.

The success of this model is heavily dependent on the life skills coordinator's freedom from the usual TAFE policy constraints to be able to conduct learning activities to suit participants' very particular needs. It is dependent on staff exercising a highly developed understanding of the participants and a commitment to a learner centred and positive culture. (*Good Practice in Adult Literacy* No 31 carries an article on the Byron Place program).

A similar example of co-operation between TAFE and ACE occurs at Aldinga Community Centre (Adelaide) where language and literacy is taught mainly on a one to one basis by voluntary tutors, mainly women. The ACE supported program is providing pathways for voluntary literacy tutors into VET through accredited tutor training courses. The program has been developed in partnership with TAFE.

3.6 Community development models

A third family of models combines elements of both 'within ACE' pathways and 'ACE to other provider' pathways. Pathway planning is embedded in a complex and well-developed community-based service that is in touch with its community and other agencies and organisations. This may be called the community development model.

This model is often found in community centres which aim to provide a comprehensive social, educational and employment program. It has an 'integrated' approach to pathways which recognises that pathways depend on bringing various services together. While the program is based on analysis of local needs, the aim is also to develop and enrich the community - it is 'community based not course based'.

This model is well represented by the Upper Yarra Neighbourhood House whose astute reading of social, economic change and government policy changes have enabled them to access resources from federal, state and local government to provide a wide variety of programs which are woven together to form the basis of many possible pathways for women's education and training.

Upper Yarra Neighbourhood House manages and integrates a Neighbourhood House Program, a general adult education program, a vocational training program, a volunteer program, a Skillshare, case management services, a citizen's advice bureau and a registered child care centre.

This provider demonstrates a deep understanding of women's learning preferences. Participants in their programs are local women of all ages, most of whom are early school leavers or have no post school education. A very large proportion are unemployed or sole parents. There are very large numbers of isolated women in the district most of whom are early school leavers and many of whom are young sole parents with 2-3 children or with an unemployed husband or who are contemplating separation but are on very low incomes.

Child care is one basis for drawing women into the activities of the House. The House environment invites interest in employment options and offers help with work and training options through its case managers. This can involve RPL assessment of existing skills. Short informal courses like "Keeping the Balls in the Air" are designed to raise confidence levels and in turn can be assessed as the General Curriculum Option (CO) of the CGEA.

In turn, the CO has been creatively used as the training component of labour market courses and in the workplace. The CGEA is itself a basis for entry to a range of accredited training courses chosen for their relevance to local needs. Women participating in these courses have ongoing support from child carers, the case manager, the course coordinator and House staff. Staff negotiate with Eastern Institute of TAFE for places in courses offered at Lilydale and Healesville, the nearest TAFE campuses, although transport is a major problem. Case managers negotiates traineeships or employment with local businesses, using information from good local networking about what is happening in the community. Employment opportunities are created through lateral thinking, assisting women to set up new businesses or encouraging existing small business owners to explore their employment needs. This has resulted in, for example, three Bed and Breakfasts clubbing together to employ staff.

Upper Yarra has a multi-faceted approach to pathways which is carefully crafted to respond to the social, educational and training needs of local women so that their local employment opportunities are enhanced through responding to identified skills shortages in the local area and assisting women to develop new businesses.

This model is distinguished by its outward looking approach to the community and attempts to link business, employment and training with supportive community work.

Outreach Community Centre, Williamstown (Victoria) provides another example of an integrated pathway process embedded in a community development model. Williamstown is a burgeoning tourist precinct. Outreach Community Centre has responded to this development in a variety of ways - identifying or creating niche markets, developing small businesses to satisfy these markets, and in this context, training women for business and employment.

Women from craft classes at the centre formed the Williamstown Tourist Craft Products Group. The group identified as its key functions the production of a quality products label, development of quality criteria for use of the label and an appropriate theme for products; "Williamstown: Past, Present and Future". It then identified gaps in available products and the required production and packaging standards. Products are produced for festivals and for specific tourist markets. Identified gaps in products are filled by approaching local craftswomen for particular items.

The Centre, through its Williamstown Tourist Craft Products Group has been offered the sole contract for supply of craft products to the new Williamstown Tourist Information Centre. Other associated outcomes have been the development of a Business Women's Network and the establishment of a small business (Greenhouse Cleaning) which provides a training and career pathway for women. Greenhouse Cleaning provides professional cleaning services to private homes using only Australian made environmentally sound products as well as vacuum cleaners especially designed for asthmatics and others with respiratory problems.

Lalor Living and Learning Centre in Melbourne illustrates how pathway choices for culturally and linguistically diverse women have been developed through networking with other community agencies.

> Initially, the predominantly migrant community of Lalor had no concept of adult education and the centre aimed to create a consciousness of adult education in a multi-faceted way. Education and training were beneficial in relation to employment and were essential for women to develop an understanding of social security, legal and schooling systems so that they could negotiate better to assist their families and children.
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> Grandmothers who often cared for their grandchildren while parents worked also needed these understandings. Women were at first reluctant to take what they saw as favours from the centre, ie the opportunity to participate in language, literacy and other programs and had to be convinced that the taxes that their families paid entitled them to these services.
>
> From one class each in language and literacy in 1987, Lalor has developed a program of courses and support systems to enhance women's education and training opportunities. Participants are predominantly women of non-English speaking background aged 40+ years many of whom have been retrenched or who are isolated by widowhood and through their adult children moving to other areas of Melbourne.

Cooperative planning developed mutual support with other relevant local agencies such as Skillshare, Citizens Advice Bureau and Family Resource Centre. The centre responds quickly to provide training for women to exploit new employment opportunities such as those provided by the completion of a new local shopping centre.

Lalor has an informal agreement with the local Kangan Institute of TAFE to provide places for each others students as women move between the two organisations mixing and matching modules to suit their planned pathways to employment.

3.7 Volunteer worker to VET training

This model is related to the community development model in that women are started on a pathway via involvement with a complex community organisation in which their volunteer work is an integral and valued part. This model makes use of the blurring of boundaries which separate "service provider" from "service user". This model also makes use of other strategies, such as creating partnerships and using an integrated approach, but the significant difference is the use of volunteering as a way of opening up possible pathways. Volunteer work is an effective strategy to enable women to make a transition into accredited training and the workforce. By doing 'real', if unpaid work, supported by relevant training, women gain confidence in their skills and build up a network of contacts.

Deer Park Community Information Centre is an example of this. It is a neighbourhood house and a registered ACE and VET provider, able to bring together different options with a high level of individual and group support and counselling. There is a clearly articulated developmental model based on actual experience and successful outcomes.

A key element in this model is a volunteer training program.

> Many women are referred from other agencies or from other Deer Park programs such as a domestic violence support group or from a Centre Against Sexual Assault. At Deer Park the Volunteer Coordinator will suggest that a woman join the Centre Support Group (funded by the Department of Human Services) or the Taking Control Group (ACFE funded).
>
> The next step is an invitation to join the Deer Park Centre Volunteer Program. Deer Park then looks for workshops or personal development courses being run by other agencies in the area, since the centre is well networked into its surrounding community and receives useful information from many sources. Deer Park pays fees

and other costs and someone accompanies each woman attending. If the woman would like to become involved in study, the Coordinator suggests that she join one of the accredited VET modules that the Centre conducts or enrol in another area she is interested in.

After three months as a volunteer at Deer Park each woman is invited to select an area of work in the Centre that will complement her training course. She then spends a half day in training, eg community legal module and a half day doing supervised legal work for the Deer Park Centre.

The Coordinator suggests that each woman join a relevant committee or working group in the community (eg at the local Legal Aid Centre) to get real life experience and to learn the jargon and processes, to become familiar with relevant documents and publications and to develop relevant networks to assist in the search for work.

Throughout the whole process each woman is assisted in documenting her experience. The volunteer training offered is competency based. It includes Mayer key competencies as well as competencies in administration, clerical and communication areas. Deer Park is seeking to have the training program accredited.

Aldinga Community Centre is a Community House which provides pathways for voluntary literacy tutors into VET through accredited tutor training courses. The Centre has long offered language and literacy learning opportunities for people in the community. Language and literacy is taught mainly on a one to one basis by voluntary tutors, mainly women.

Aldinga uses a complementary pathway model which provides pathways for women both as voluntary tutors and as adult literacy students. The program is a partnership between ACE organisations and TAFE institutes and the ACE Support Unit has played a role in facilitating the program

Often the volunteer tutor trainee has been a Centre user before becoming a voluntary tutor and participants are also drawn from other programs at the Community House or through advertisements or people at the local volunteer centre.

The volunteers gain skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to engage in education and training courses. Aldinga encourages volunteer tutors to enrol externally and work from learning materials, while supporting trainees through individual mentoring and mentoring meetings.

Adult literacy students can then move from the volunteer program to the Certificate in Preparatory Education, delivered jointly by Aldinga and TAFE at Aldinga, then into TAFE for completion of the certificate which in turn provides a pathway into the Introduction to Vocational Education Certificate offered by TAFE.

A similar training program for ESL voluntary tutors is currently being developed by TAFE. Aldinga plans to offer this course late in 1997 and, since the centre is not an accredited provider of VET, it will form a joint venture with TAFE which will auspice the delivery.

The program has been developed in partnership with TAFE. ACE funds TAFE to deliver the Good Practice for Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutors module of the Certificate 4 in Community Services. Voluntary tutors can move into accredited training and are qualified to proceed with the whole Certificate of Community Services and/or to seek paid employment.

3.8 Culturally appropriate pathway models

Successful strategies to develop pathways for indigenous women to VET show recognition of the great diversity of their situations and cultures. There are women in urban environments and regional centres such as Albury-Wodonga (NSW/Victoria), or Koondoola (WA) and Rosewater East (SA), as well as women in remote communities in Arnhem Land or outside Alice Springs.

However, there are some common aspects to the models being followed, as well as specific differences, especially where women speak primarily in their tribal languages and live in indigenous communities remote from urban settlement.

In the Northern Territory, the Department of Education established a program to deliver accredited training to indigenous women in remote areas of the NT. Following completion of an extensive needs analysis, Nungalinya College, which is a private training provider and the Aboriginal Development Unit within the NT Department of Education formed a partnership to pilot a Certificate in Bi-Cultural Life Studies in six isolated communities in Arnhem Land.

Ways of providing culturally appropriate training in remote communities are still evolving. The Certificate in Bi-Cultural Life Studies is being delivered by those groups participating in it and who identified the need for it. The delivery method is characterised by both cost effectiveness and relevance to community learning styles.

The target group comprises Aboriginal people living in small communities in locations remote from mainstream educational centres, who generally have very little access to the kinds of training in which they are interested. The Certificate in Bi-Cultural Life Studies involves the delivery of a number of nationally accredited modules that focus on literacy, numeracy and health.

In preference to bringing in trainers from outside the communities, respected leaders chosen by their communities have been given authority to deliver these modules. The selected people are either trained teachers or have completed Workplace Trainer Category 1, a nationally recognised training program. These trainers combine a knowledge of the module's content with the ability to speak the local languages and follow cultural practices.

The project has received overwhelming support from the communities involved and this response reflects the sense of ownership which is generated when community people deliver the training. This positive response to the training delivered so far is also due to the fact that the content is appropriate - it matches real community needs. An example of the process is the Warrawi community.

> Warrawi is a small community on Goulburn Island north of Darwin. Here, a group of women, led by their local trainer, decided to hold an important traditional ceremony where over 200 people would gather for a week of dancing. Their objective was to achieve important ceremonial outcomes almost lost to the community.
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> The many competencies required by the women to organise the ceremony crossed domains of both personal and public communication. The literacy and numeracy skills included: writing letters, phoning and faxing people, identifying lost ceremonial artefacts and negotiating and requesting their return to the community from a national body, ordering supplies of goods, and ordering and buying fabrics for

ceremonial dress. The competencies matched many of the learning outcomes in the Certificate of Bi-Cultural Life Studies.

The use of visual literacy is a persuasive way to present ideas and also served as an assessment of the women's learning. During the organisational stage of the project, the women painted banners to tell stories about the ceremony. The social meaning on the banner centred the women's intentions.

The community will continue to benefit from a resource which will remind them of their learning and the achievement of a goal set and directed by themselves. At the end of the training participants have gained valuable life skills from a real and relevant learning medium that was both enjoyable and challenging.

Koondoola Neighbourhood Centre illustrates the potential role of small ACE providers in bringing VET to small communities which do not have easy access to formal institutions, and some of the difficulties of unequal ACE-TAFE partnerships. Koondoola is a non-government welfare service in the northern suburbs of Perth where there is a high migrant and Aboriginal population. The Centre's primary purpose is to connect and develop community and to help people overcome disadvantage especially the disadvantage of low literacy skills isolation and lack of family support. The Centre's philosophy is that the way out of disadvantage is primarily through education and that if they provide opportunities to make contact, to access information and to develop awareness people can move on to the next level of learning which is usually in an ACE program.

Koondoola supports individuals by offering learning opportunities through craft, home skills, practical life skills, coping skills, self development. Participants are encouraged to make sense of the pathways to disadvantage and assisted to build a pathway out. The model focuses on empowerment, that is, not doing things for people but helping people do things for themselves.

In 1994-95, Koondoola was supporting a group of Aboriginal women who were already well established in the Centre. The group developed a sense of purpose by focusing on playgroup activities and therefore parenting skills. After a time the mothers felt comfortable about separating from their children for short periods to do things for themselves and they started producing art works. This led to an art display and the women teaching art to others in the community. They also participated in mini programs in self development, culture and family relations.

Meanwhile, the local TAFE College had been receiving funding to offer educational programs in community settings but no programs had yet eventuated. Koondoola, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Departments of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs and of Human Services and Health, approached the college to conduct the New Opportunities for Aboriginal Women Program at the Centre, seeing it as tailor made for the Aboriginal women's group.

Once TAFE had agreed to deliver the course at Koondoola, DEETYA funded the advertising, course materials, transport, training of Aboriginal women to conduct the course and the provision of assessments and careers counselling to the participants. Family and Community Services provided a mini bus and the Department of Human Services and Health, through the JET program, provided the staff, materials and resources for culturally appropriate child care.

In July 1995, sixteen women enrolled in the semester long course. They ranged in age from 20-35 years, were all very early school leavers, all CES eligible and all had more than one child, including a number of children with disabilities. All resources at Koondoola were put toward the New Opportunities for Aboriginal Women Program. Centre staff provided counselling, transport, family and personal support to all participants.

> Koondoola has had many offers from the TAFE College to repeat the course but there is not yet a group of Aboriginal women ready for it. Moreover, the centre believes that some changes to the program are essential if the women are to succeed without the resources of the entire centre being devoted to their progress. Indeed a number of serious problems had been encountered which are outlined below.

Koondoola encountered a range of significant problems in carrying through the course. These concerned the lack of TAFE support other than the provision of teachers, the lack of management by TAFE of their teaching staff and a lack of flexibility about structural elements such as the number of places, the number of hours per week teaching and the length of the course. The College provided only direct course delivery costs and Koondoola's role was to coordinate, support and solve problems in the program.

The Continuing Education Centre, Albury Wodonga developed a Certificate in Commercial Printing for Koories in partnership with the Koorie community through the Aboriginal corporation.

> Development began with lots of "meetings" around the kitchen table. The whole community needed to have time to question, consider and decide what to do, a pattern of initial development common within Aboriginal culture, and is described as relevant to all women's culture.
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> The decision was to set up the full 80 hour Commercial Printing Course which ACFEB funded and for which the Corporation bought the equipment. It was done, on site, at the proposed shopfront. Promotion was effective because it took the form of people talking to people, the CEC and the Corporation and the Koorie people. At first a few came. Then word got around. More came. Some went. There was a continuous enrolment process. Completion of the whole course was important to some, less so to others.
>
> The CEC was fortunate to secure the services of a TAFE teacher who had her own screen printing business and was therefore aware not only of technique and teaching but also of product, quality and business. Professional development was provided for all tutors in the course by Koorie trainers from the district who had links with the Wodonga Koorie community. The tutors were thus well prepared to work in a culturally different environment.
>
> Classes were planned to meet the learners' preferences. For example the classes were provided one whole day per week within school hours, there was flexibility for learners to wander in and out, classes were planned around school holidays, school sports etc, classes suspended when there was a death in the family, child care was provided on site with culturally appropriate child carers. Even though the Koories in Wodonga appear highly urbanised, traditional cultural responsibilities are very important.
>
> In class there was no note taking. Learning was oral and graphic. Such fabulous designs were produced that it was soon seen that using only T-shirts with the screen printing process were too restrictive and the group went on to use the lino cut process and to produce sheets, doona covers, pillowslips, table cloths and then wrapping paper.

This model is similar in its principles and processes to the models from Arnhem Land and appears to be equally effective despite the apparent differences between the groups, such as the degree of urbanisation of the Aboriginal participants.

Negotiation of culturally appropriate arrangements is vital to enable access and equity for indigenous women, and is also an important factor to consider in developing pathways for other groups, especially but not only for culturally and linguistically diverse women. Good

practice takes into account the culture of the participants and their social, economic and political situation. Providers are frequently working to counter oppression, not simply disadvantage. The case of Lalor Living and Learning Centre provides a good illustration.

3.9 Statewide facilitating strategies

Another set of practices emerge from state-wide strategies where arrangements are made on behalf of providers which will facilitate the use of a pathway. For example, an agency such as a regional ACE council (found in Victoria and NSW) can play a role in smoothing the progression of students from ACE to TAFE by making credit transfer arrangements explicit and clear. This approach includes the use of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning.

The Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of ACFE in Victoria recently developed a project to improve linkages between community providers and TAFE. The project recognised that originally simple agreements about informal credit transfer developed over the years had now become quite complex. A range of coherent models of credit transfer applicable in the current training environment was developed.

The first of these defined a process to facilitate credit transfer to the local TAFE institute which would then formalise and document the arrangement. The second model was more formalised and recognised the ACE provider as an extended campus of a TAFE institute for certain courses. This model was said to have three benefits: the delivery of VET increased support; it enabled provision of professional development for ACE staff; and it also was a way for students to gain certification from TAFE.

A third model is a process which allows a student from an ACE provider credit transfer to any TAFE institute (or other VET provider) statewide which offers the relevant VET course. Protocols for consulting and negotiating with TAFE were spelled out.

> With assistance from the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council of ACFE, four providers in the Hawthorn area of Melbourne: Hawthorn Community House; Hawthorn Community Education Project; Kew Community House and Swinburne University (TAFE Division), have formed a consortium which is engaged in mapping VET competencies in social and community services curriculum to the General Curriculum Option of the CGEA.
>
> A recommendation is expected shortly from the SACS Curriculum Maintenance Manager for accreditation of the model by the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board. This will enable ACE providers to seek credit transfer for students without incurring the charges TAFE institutes currently make for issuing certificates to ACE students.

In those states where TAFE Institutes deliver Stream 1000 as ACE courses an easy pathway for women who are able to pay fees is to move into an accredited stream of study from a non-credit course. One approach by some ACE co-ordinators in Queensland is to align the non-credit courses as closely as possible to the accredited courses by using TAFE teachers and curriculum modules. It is then a small step for students to complete the assessment which will make the course accredited. The main difficulty experienced is resistance from other teaching sections who see ACE courses as competing for their students.

3.10 Specific programs for equity target groups

This model can form a more complex and developed pathway plan. The organising principle is to respond to the educational or employment needs of a particular equity target group. An appropriate course is designed and steps are taken to ensure that appropriate support and resources are available.

Such courses are typical of those run by the Deaf Education Network in Sydney, formerly the Adult Education Centre for Deaf and Hearing Impaired People. The 'Deaf Can' course for young unemployed deaf people has run successfully for some time, partly funded by the CES employment service. This course involves both a literacy and work placement component. One problem has been the lack of flexibility in the classification of young people who move around the loop involving full-time study, unemployment and training.

Another example is the Mature Age Study Program developed by Learning Centre Link, the state wide association of neighbourhood learning centres and neighbourhood houses in WA. This program was run at Milligan House in Bunbury and is outlined in section 3.1. Women from this neighbourhood house have experienced difficulties when they approached the local TAFE institute to further their options, and currently no partnership between providers seems possible.

These models are quite different in ethos and organisation from the usual general adult education course. They identify specific needs and are designed to meet those needs, and they usually require higher levels of resourcing. The course may only come about because funding has become available in order to target and encourage this kind of participation and for this reason, particular efforts need to be made to ensure that other 'follow on' options are developed.

3.11 Open learning as pathway strategy

Larger states, with small communities geographically remote from main centres and VET providers, have developed open learning approaches to extend women's options for VET.

In 1992 the Queensland Open Learning Network, with support from the Women's Policy Unit of the Premier's department (now Women's Affairs Unit), conducted a survey to understand the education and training needs of women living in non-metropolitan areas who wished to return to the work force. The purpose of the survey was to investigate training programs throughout Queensland and the use of distance delivery that incorporated effective use of interactive communication tools, such as audio graphics conferencing.

> The survey revealed that while women in rural and remote areas were playing important decision making roles in their families they lacked education and training opportunities and confidence in their ability to learn new work skills. Personal doubts concerning ability and general low self esteem were found to influence women on entry to the workforce.
>
> The Women's Re-entry to Work Program was conducted as a pilot in 1996 and is due to be accredited in 1997. It was designed to provide women seeking paid employment with skills such as job seeking, managing work and family, small business management, writing and numeracy and computing. The program consists of seven units delivered throughout all eighteenQueensland Open Learning Centres from Weipa in Cape York to Barcaldine in Western Queensland and south to Toowoomba.

> The 450 women involved in the Program were diverse in age, educational background, length of unemployment, life experiences and goals. Some had been out of paid employment for more than twenty years and recognition of their own skills was greatly lacking.

While the method of delivery might have been daunting initially, the combination of interactive games, discussion and encouragement resulted in women warming to technology, a willingness to use hands-on interaction and a resulting increase in confidence. The delivery technology (audiographics - the transmission of images, text and sound between computers and telephones which gave participants the means to share visual as well as auditory information) soon became a background part of the learning process.

In order to improve the self esteem of the participants, it was necessary to consciously include them as individuals during the delivery. This was achieved by greeting each of them at the start of every session. This approach personalised their learning and established a rapport with their presenter. Discussion purposely called on participants at different centres in turn to include everyone.

As well as valuable learning outcomes achieved by the program, there were other highly desirable outcomes. Participants established friendships and became supportive of each other and they gained knowledge and understanding of other areas of Queensland. They were also exposed to an exciting and new form of interactive technology. An important feature of the system is that education and training activities may originate from any location, enabling and empowering small and large communities to deliver as well as receive courses.

The significance of new communication technologies was noted in the study by Coventry and Higginson (1997) as supporting strategies to overcome barriers to women's access to appropriate VET based in their own localities. The research showed that new technology can also facilitate networking among providers and the development of partnerships, as noted already in regard to small providers in Gippsland, Victoria.

3.12 Summary

This section of the report has documented a wide range of models for planning pathways for women from ACE to VET. It draws upon rich accounts of community-based practice given by providers in their interviews. Description of the models attempts to retain the flavour of the interviews, since in many cases the 'models' are embedded in the holistic practice of community adult education.

While it might have been possible to summarise the 'bare bones' of the pathway models, this would have missed the very principles providers explained were most important to the success of their pathway planning: the necessity of providing first learning experiences in a supportive environment; the development of a comprehensive range of options, provision of clear advise and information to women about their choices, the negotiation and customising of content and delivery to achieve the outcomes, and so on.

The final section of the report draws out implications for developing pathways in the states and territories and outlines issues which need to be considered by state training authorities if the rhetoric regarding women's pathways is to be translated into educational realities.

4. Conclusions

One of the aims of the project was to publish information about good practice which would assist providers to develop pathways for women from ACE to VET. Thus the project will reflect back to ACE organisations the things they have said about effective pathway development. The Provider Handbook documents the rich detail of models of pathway development. This approach aims both to validate and to improve existing practice.

Another achievement of the project is the documentation of the formal VET system's interaction with non-formal and community-based provision. The documentation includes strategies for maximising opportunities for learners, particularly disadvantaged individuals and communities. The research sheds light on the effect of boundaries between ACE and TAFE institutions in each state. It also indicates what steps can be taken to ensure that learners are encouraged and supported to move freely within the overall system. This enables the system to be 'open and diverse' and embody principles of lifelong learning in line with current national policies.

This section draws conclusions from the research reported in detail in previous sections. Pathways development is affected by both national and state policies on ACE and VET and by what organisations themselves can achieve 'on the ground' taking these policies into account. In particular the research examined:

- What is it about ACE providers that facilitates pathway planning and implementation?
- What is good community-based practice contributing to pathways?
- What is it about government ACE and VET policy and planning that either facilitates or hinders pathway development?

The research discovered that in most states, the basic conditions to promote pathway development are lacking or poorly developed. A strong network of community providers is necessary, but perhaps this is not enough to establish pathways from ACE to formal VET provision. The factor which plays a key role in developing women's pathways is a *well-developed* community-based practice. Where this is not well-developed, there are few pathways and few models of good practice. This underlines the need to consider whether strategic objectives for the VET system are giving enough emphasis and enough incentive for ACE providers and VET institutions to engage in pathway planning.

Resourcing emerged as a key issue. The ability of ACE to develop pathways will remain rhetoric unless resourcing issues are given closer attention. There is a clear implication that state training authorities should resource their community providers to carry out the work of pathway development.

Concommitantly, it is important that VET competition policy (ANTA, 1996) is designed to reward rather than discourage arrangements which facilitate the movements of learners from one provider to another or from ACE to VET within providers.

The research has generated many examples of good practice in pathway development enabling a number of conclusions to be drawn about the way forward. These are discussed under the following headings:

- Factors which promote pathway development
- State and system constraints on ACE
- Principles for planning pathways
- Some issues for consideration

4.1 Factors promoting pathway development in ACE

The interviews give a great deal of insight into what conditions and practices facilitate the development of pathways from ACE to VET for women. This information adds to the already significant wealth of case studies of good practice in adult and community education (eg Bulletin of Good Practice, 1995; Bradshaw, 1995; Sharpe and Robertson, 1996; Coventry and Higginson, 1996).

One conclusion is that *pathway planning is facilitated where it is an integral part of community-based practice*. Pathways are most readily arranged by providers who are responding to the needs of their communities by providing a range of options, and where they understand pathways development from ACE in a holistic way. That is to say, a pathway is not limited to setting up an arrangement to link one course to another. It is much more about setting up options for learners and assisting them to take the directions which they feel ready to take on the strength of their learning.

For this reason the 'community development' model is highlighted as the most comprehensive and best developed approach to planning pathways from ACE to VET. Pathways are developed from the range of services and experiences, they are learner pathways.

In the first section of the report it was argued that an 'ACE course' should be primarily understood as any course delivered by an ACE organisation - that is, a community-owned and community-managed adult education provider. The reason for the need for this clarification will now be clear, as it is integral to the argument that pathway development is most likely to be a standard feature of ACE practice where ACE organisations are developing their potential as community-based organisations within a broad system of education and training. This is the case in states where ACE organisations are recognised and supported. Where ACE organisations are not recognised as a sector within the state system, this potential is diminished.

Thus, with other researchers in other recent projects (eg Sharpe and Robertson, 1996), and now the Senate Standing Committee in its second major report on ACE (SCEET, 1997) this report argues that the recognition and support of ACE (and cooperative arrangements between ACE and VET as two independent but complementary and related systems) are the most important conditions for fully developing the potential of both ACE and VET to create pathways to VET for women and most particularly for disadvantaged women.

4.2 State and system constraints on ACE

In the Models section of the report it was noted that differences in state/territory policies have profound effects on the capacity of ACE to link with the VET system. Bearing in mind the different situation of ACE in the different states and territories, the following observations are made about pathway planning.

In **South Australia**, the main problem is that ACE funding is too minimal to act as a springboard for development of pathways. There are isolated examples of ACE or other providers creating pathways in their own localities but little systemic support or commitment for ACE providers to develop important pathways. Some TAFE colleges are doing some good pathway work on the basis of CGEA, CSWE or pre-vocational courses. There appears to be no recognition of ACE contribution to VET, indeed ACE providers do not seem to be welcome as players in the VET system. A number have obtained registration to provide accredited courses but none have received any VET funding. ACE funding is too small to support provision of VET courses in community providers.

NSW has placed more emphasis on the development of VET options than pathway development, especially among the larger providers, who appear to regard pathways as informal and individual rather than based on conscious models. The expanding provision of VET with the Board of ACE administering ANTA funds has created wider options for pathways between non-credit and accredited courses within ACE. The main incentive for ACE providers to develop pathways appears to emerge as a direct response to community need such as in Gravesend, Illawarra or Wyong.

Queensland has no ACE sector. ACE in community providers is not recognised nor supported. Even the Queensland Open Learning Network is focused on VET or higher education though it is providing pathways for women. Most ACE occurs in TAFE, and is user-pays. There seems to be virtually no pathway thinking that includes any form of ACE.

In **Victoria** there is strong infrastructure support for ACE providers and for VET in ACE providers. Resources are invested in planning, professional development and strategic policy as well as in delivery. Responsive policy initiatives mean that the system meets the community with productive outcomes. The system encourages open, innovative, cooperative, multifaceted and multi-resourced developments which reward awareness and networking at local, state and national level. There is a culture of 'How can we make the rules work to our community's advantage?' This is often stressful for small providers and not all of them by any means are equally strategic, but most are contributing to pathways at least in a small way and all of them are conscious of pathways as relevant to what they do.

In the **Northern Territory**, ACE is constrained by bureaucracy and government policy. To provide courses relevant to Aboriginal women, the Aboriginal Development Unit of the Department of Education has had to struggle to negotiate overly complicated prescriptions of government policy for VET. There seems to be no assurance of ongoing funding even once something has been developed. The reality of learning for Aboriginal people is not reflected in policies and the system lacks the flexibility to support community-based as opposed to institutionalised provision.

There appear to be few identifiable ACE organisations (with the exception of Nhulumbuy in East Arnhem Land) and no associations of community providers that could point to pathway developments for non-indigenous people in NT.

In **Tasmania**, there do not appear to be many examples of pathway development. Approximately 90% of ACE delivery is through the Institute of Adult Education which forms part of the Department of Vocational Education and Training along with TAFE institutes. ACE is also provided through a network of community houses and local school and church organisations.

That the bulk of the examples are Victorian points to the positive effects of a strong network of community providers able to negotiate pathways within the state system. At the other end of the spectrum, where ACE organisations are not formally recognised by the state government as a sector, it is very difficult for them to perform a pathway role. Where they do, it is in spite of a lack of resources from the state training authority.

4.3 Principles for planning pathways

The range of models for pathway development makes it possible to state some broad principles which will facilitate the development of pathways. Some of these are systemic principles, such as:

- recognise ACE organisations formally within the state training system, for their contribution to pathway development
- include ACE providers within the delivery of VET in the state, by encouraging their accreditation and access to funding, where appropriate, as VET providers
- codify arrangements on a regional or system-wide basis, to facilitate the transfer of credit from ACE to TAFE and the recognition of prior learning
- include ACE providers in the development of open learning and flexible delivery policies and planning

Another set of principles has become evident in the process of describing the different 'models' of pathway development reported in the previous section. These 'models' of good practice often incorporate a range of principles which might assist other providers to develop pathways for women. In many cases, as previously suggested, these are part and parcel of good practice in community adult education.

Pathway planning is facilitated where providers -

- promote the potential of responsive provision to their communities as the basis of pathway planning [community responsiveness]
- understand pathway entry points in terms of a range of options and experiences available to learners, and do not limit pathways to linkages between formal courses [informality]
- assess the learner's educational and life experiences, needs and goals in defining pathway options [individualisation]

- design the timing, venue, process, activities and tutoring to reflect the needs and goals of individuals from the target group [adaptation]
- integrate adult literacy with vocational training, rather than make completion of literacy a barrier to vocational learning [integration]
- develop training which targets the preferred and available local employment of a group of learners and offer relevant and practical training, including accredited courses [vocation]
- develop partnerships with VET providers to provide a greater range of accredited courses and maximise the vocational options for learners [collaboration]
- network with other community agencies to ensure that participation in courses is supported by appropriate services [networking]
- negotiate culturally appropriate pathways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and for other cultural groups [cultural appropriateness]
- develop packages of funding from various sources to create flexible, responsive pathways [resourcefulness]
- exploit the development of open learning approaches and technologies to promote pathway options for people beyond attendance [openness]

4.4 Some issues for consideration

This final section draws attention to a number of issues for consideration in the development of policy and practice:

- importance of strong government support for ACE

The bulk of examples from Victoria point to the positive effects of strong government policy support for ACE providers and for VET in ACE providers together with resources invested in strategic policy and planning, quality assurance, professional development, promotion, curriculum and materials development and as well as program delivery. Responsive policy initiatives enable the system to meet the community - with productive outcomes. While certainly not perfect and still under-resourced, the Victorian system encourages open, innovative, cooperative, multifaceted and multi resourced developments which reward awareness and networking at local, state and national levels. This is coupled with a strong network of community providers increasingly able to negotiate pathways within the state system.

- lack of sectoral recognition inhibits pathways

Conversely, where ACE organisations are not formally recognised and supported by the state government as a sector, it is very difficult for them to perform a pathway role. That they do so at all appears serendipitous in the context of the state ACE/VET system in which they are located. Thus, where they do so, it is in spite of the lack of resources or policy inclusion from the state training authority.

Lack of sectoral recognition is a disincentive to ACE-TAFE partnerships. Where ACE has no standing, it makes it difficult for neighbourhood houses or community centres to argue that TAFE institutes should negotiate collaborative arrangements with them.

However, sectoral recognition in itself does not encourage pathway development. Along with the evidence of successful partnerships, the interviews also uncovered a lack of interest by many TAFE institutes in collaboration with ACE organisations to create pathways to VET. In some ways this situation is due to the way competition for public funding of VET has been regulated by government.

- providing ACE through the user-pays system creates an equity problem

As the literature review noted, the cost-recovery basis of ACE, whether provided through community organisations or through TAFE institutes, is a significant disincentive to equity because it excludes most disadvantaged women.

In some departments of some TAFE institutes, especially access departments, a commitment to develop a culture, processes and programs congenial to and empowering of women has had pathway outcomes. But this has not happened by chance. There is no evidence that in itself TAFE provision of Stream 1000 courses is assisting women to identity and tread a path into VET, since there is no doubt that many factors, including the fees charged, the form of delivery, and the personal and social costs, limit access to equity groups. It is mainly where TAFE institutes have an outreach provision that pathway development is most likely to occur. However, this kind of development involves processes such as advising, assessment and recognition of prior learning which are not cost-free.

- positioning of community providers in competition policy

As a generalisation, competition policy as currently understood in most states and territories is not encouraging the development of pathways from ACE to VET for disadvantaged people. The rules of competition in VET provision mean that ACE organisations cannot easily compete for resources on the basis of their competitive strength as community organisations able to extend VET into communities. (In some states, there has been no flow of resources to ACE at all.)

As noted in the literature review, ANTA is currently formulating policy to promote competition in the training market (ANTA, 1996). ANTA has defined a concept of local 'intermediaries' who broker education and training for industry clients. This concept could very aptly describe the role ACE organisations are playing in developing pathways from ACE to VET for disadvantaged groups and giving individuals who lack it most some degree of 'user-choice'.

It is possible that current thinking on competition policy in the emerging national VET system (ANTA, 1996) may result in competitive practices which raise further barriers to the development of learner pathways between ACE and VET. This research has shown that pathways for disadvantaged individuals do not result from disadvantaged learners independently exercising 'user choice'. Rather, pathways result from ACE organisations identifying and negotiating options with and for individuals.

One implication is that competitive funding which targets 'user choice' by disadvantaged women may be the most direct way to secure the pathway development desired by the National Women's VET Strategy.

Thus, it is recommended that the National Women's VET Taskforce examine the effects of current ANTA competition policy in the context of state/territory interpretation of National Competition Policy, for its possible effects, both positive and negative, on the creation of pathways from ACE to VET for women, and particularly disadvantaged women.

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Pathway Planning project

Interview Schedule

What form do the pathway arrangements take?

Who are the partners?

How long have these arrangements been in operation?

How were these arrangements developed? By whom?

What problems did you encounter?

What is the route of the pathway?

To which course and provider?

To which students do these arrangements apply?

Under what conditions?

What processes are used? (eg negotiation, RPL etc)

How are students made aware of these options?

Which students have these arrangements served so far?

- Their age?
- Background
- educational level
- demographic characteristics
- employment status

How would you rate the success of these arrangements?

What plans do you have to expand these arrangements?

Can you provide copies of any documentation? eg agreement, memorandum of understanding, report, model.

Context information

As you know, good practice models of pathways for women from ACE to VET make best sense when described in context. So that we can provide a brief contextual base, please provide the following information about your centre/department as a whole.

1. Demographic features of the community.

   Please circle the most appropriate descriptions:

   isolated / remote / rural / suburban / inner urban

   socio-economic level: very low / low / medium / high

   Proportion of people from non-English speaking backgrounds: very low / low / average / high

   Proportion indigenous Australians: nil / low / medium / high

2. Total no of enrolments 1996: .....

3. Total no of SCH 1996: .....

4. Sources of funding 1996: $

ACE	.....
VET (ANTA)	.....
VET (DEETYA)	.....
Adult literacy	.....
ESL	.....
Community/Human Services	.....
Local government	.....
Fees	.....
Other	.....
Total	.....

Thankyou for your assistance

Glossary of Acronyms

AAACE	Australian Association of Adult and Community Education
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACEG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
ACFEB	Adult, Community and Further Education Board (Victoria)
ACTRAC	Australian Committee on Training Curriculum
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEC	Australian Education Council
ACFE	Adult Community and Further Education (Victoria_
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
AMES	Adult Migrant English (formerly Education) Service
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ANTARAC	Research Advisory Council, ANTA (pre-1997)
ASF	Australian Skills Framework
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BACE	Board of Adult and Community Education (NSW)
BVET	Board of Vocational Education and Training, NSW
CEC	Continuing Education Centre
CSWE	Certificate in Written and Spoken English
CGEA	Certificates in General Education for Adults
CAEC	Community Adult Education Centre
CALM	Conservation, Agriculture and Land Management (NSW)
CBT	Competency Based Training
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CTEP	Community Training and Employment Program (NSW)
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training (Federal - old name)
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education,Training & Youth Affairs (Federal)
DIRE	Department of Industrial Relations and Training (NSW)
DSS	Department of Social Security
ECCA	Evening and Community Colleges Association (NSW)
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ESFC	Employment and Skills Formation Council
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCO	General Curriculum Option (of the CGEA)
HACC	Home and Community Care
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs

NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NFROT	National Framework for the Recognition of Training
NLLIA	National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia
NTB	National Training Board
SIP	Special Intervention Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAP	Training for Aboriginal People
TGA	Training Guarantee Act
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Agency
VETAB	Vocational Education and Training Board
WEA	Workers Educational Association

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